

A STAR WARS COLOUR-IN EDITION

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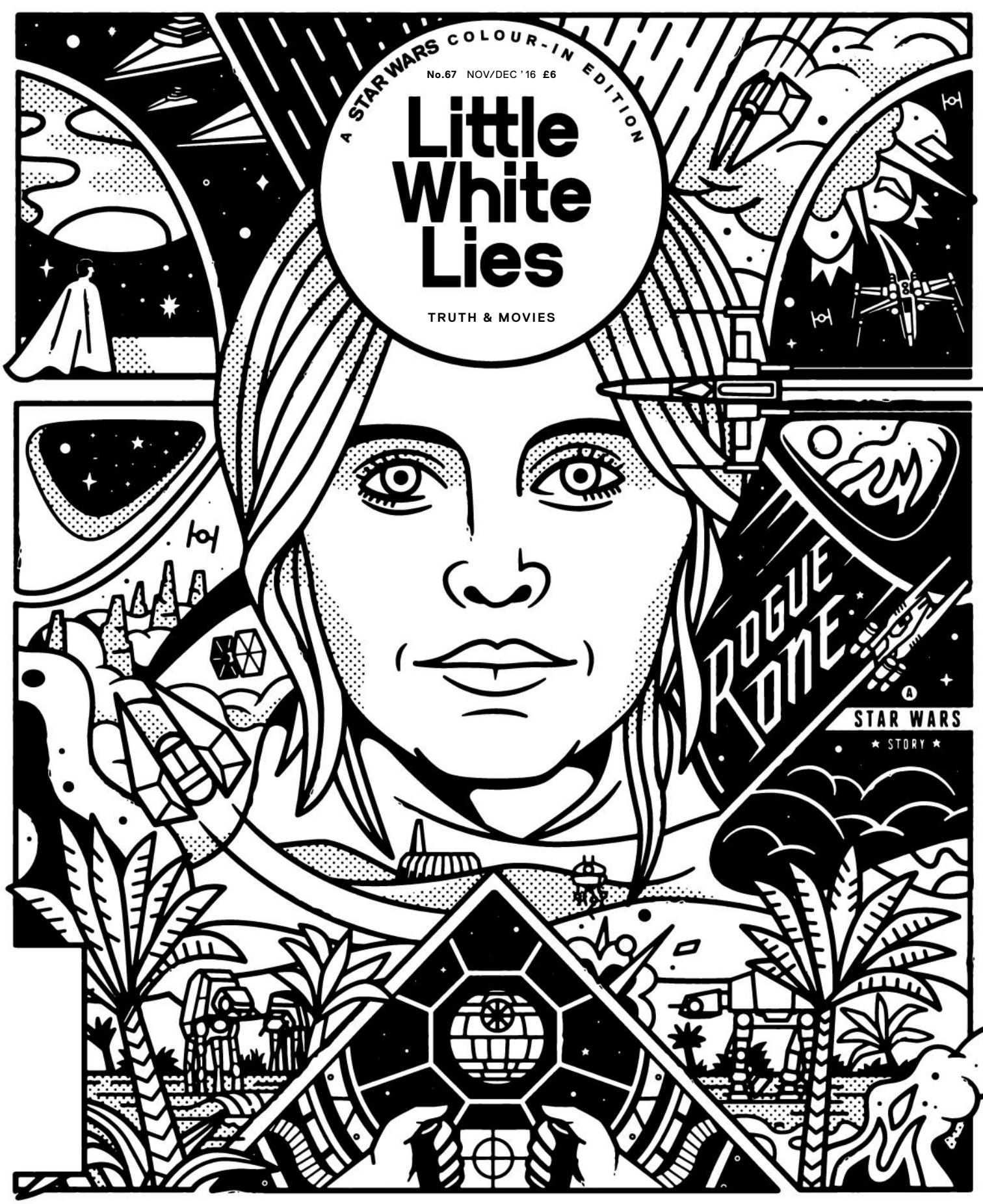
Little White Lies

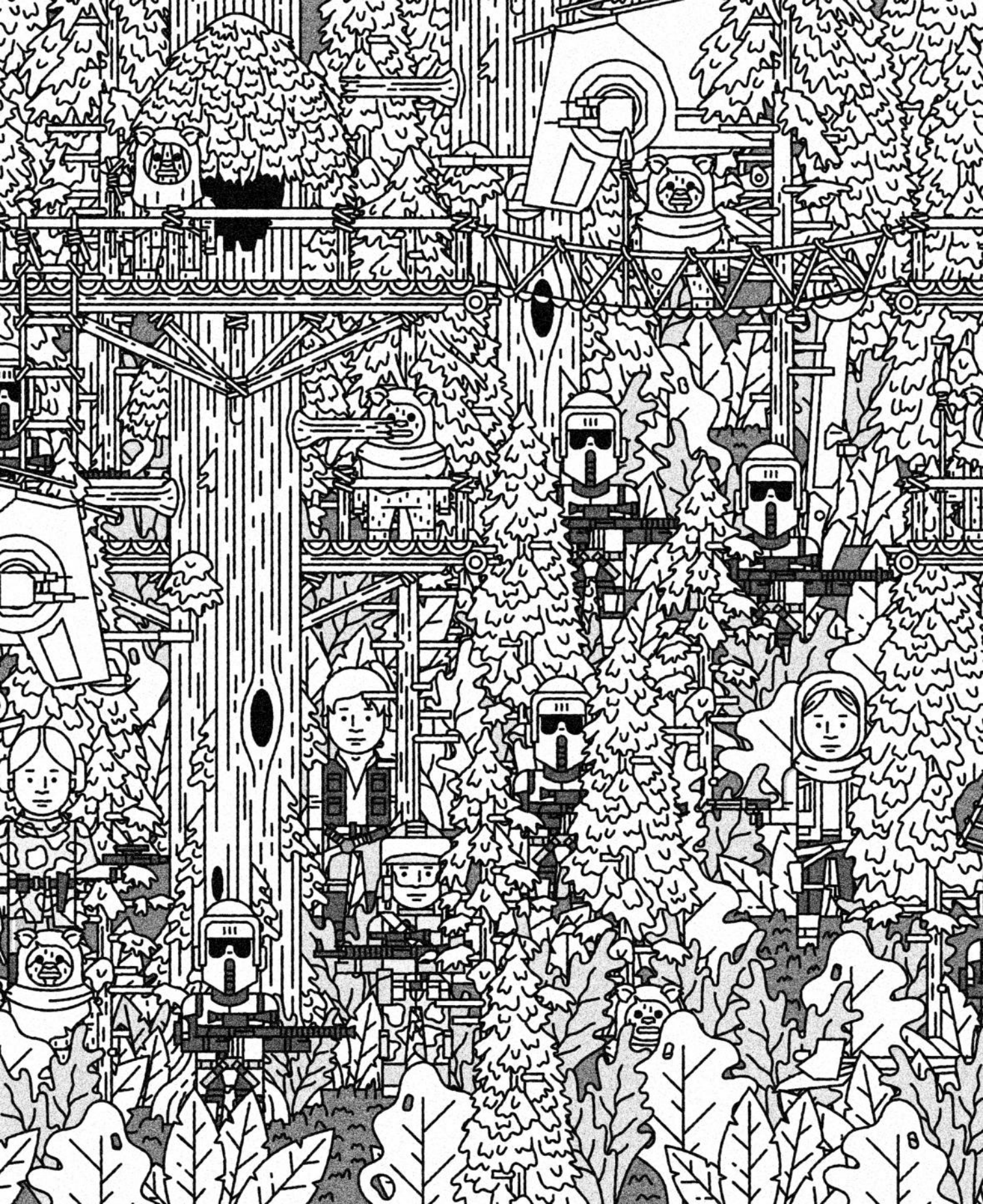
TRUTH & MOVIES

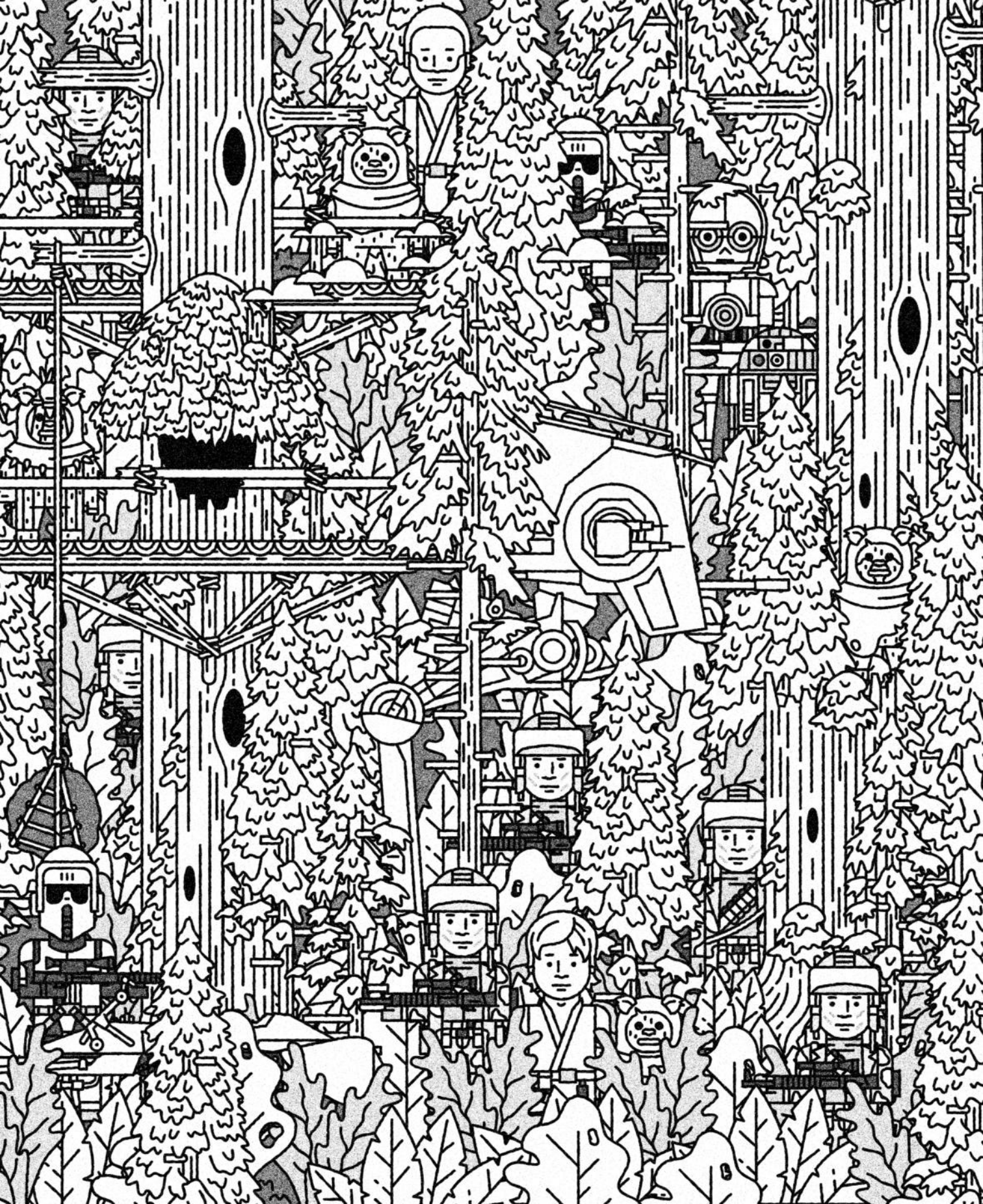
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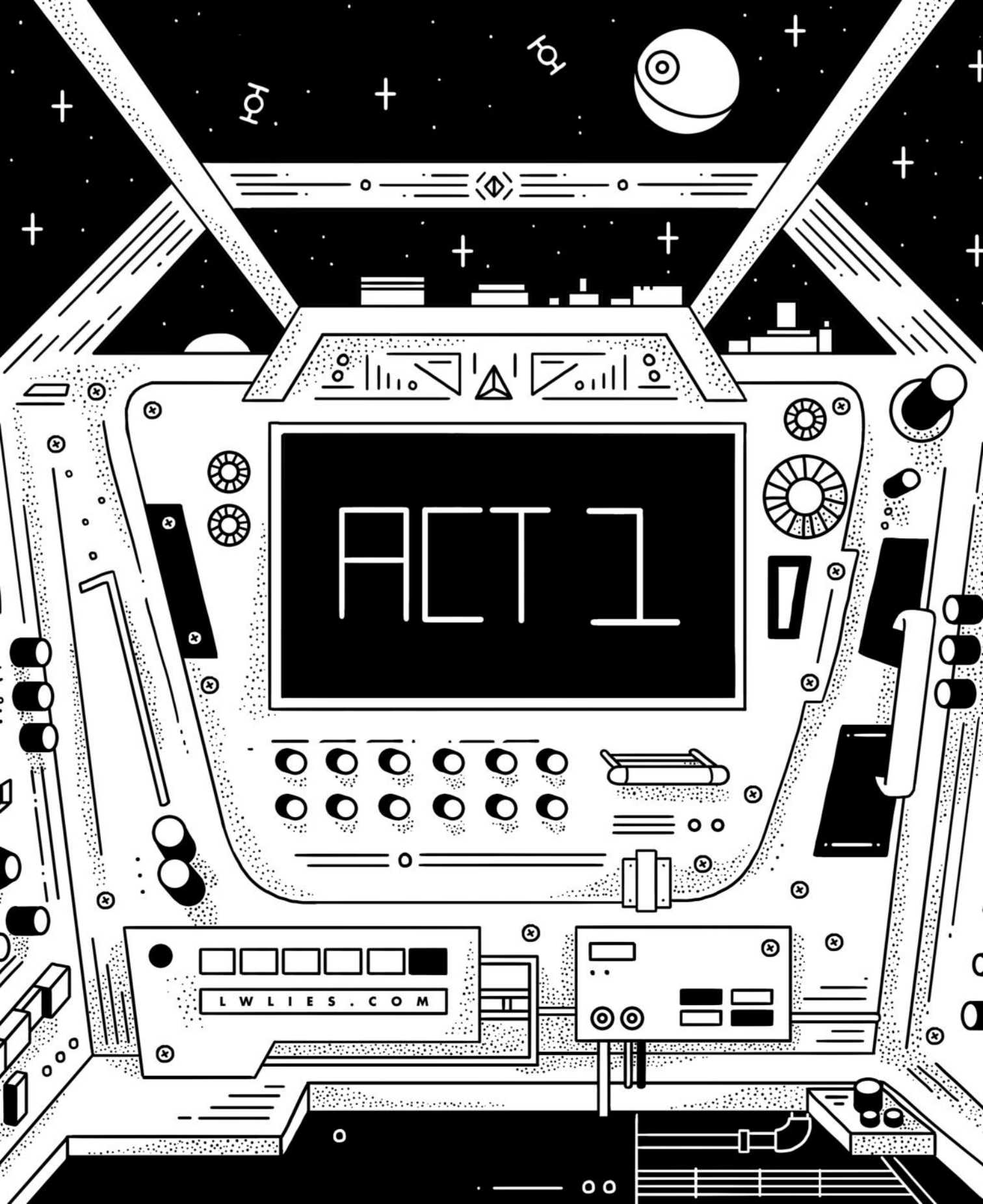
STAR WARS

★ STORY ★









ROGUE ONE

A STAR WARS COLOUR-IN ISSUE

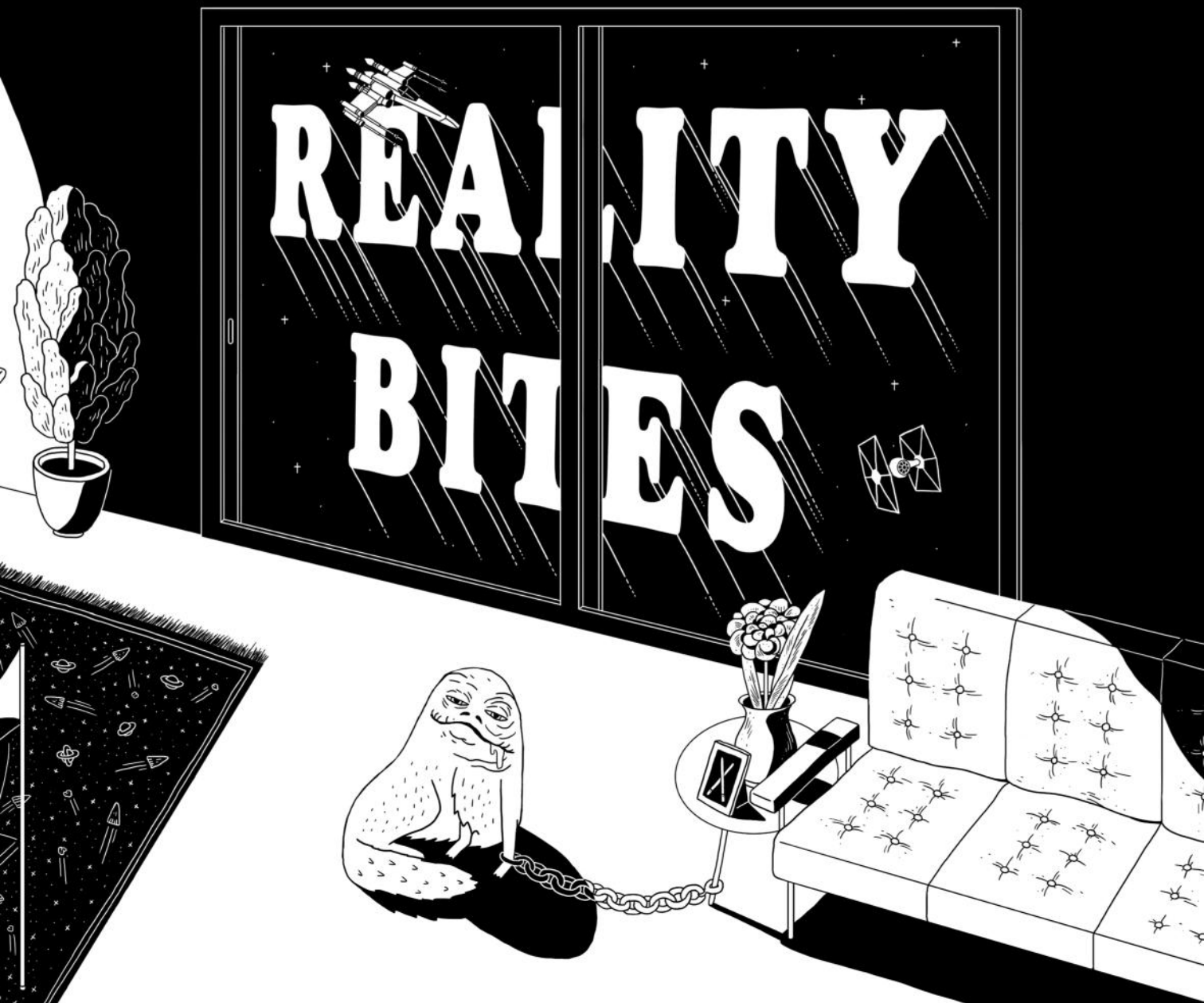
INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE

From its very origins, the *Star Wars* saga has used black and white in a range of subtle and original ways. Imagine if Darth Vader's cybernetic armour had been white? Imagine if Luke Skywalker had embarked on his date with destiny clad in all-black robes? The clash of opposites embedded into the fabric of the films is what makes them so relatable, so lovable and so dramatic.

In this spirit, *Little White Lies* is pitting black against white – the Rebel Alliance verses the Evil Empire. While each monochrome illustration offers a striking encapsulation of this dark side / light side concept, we also invite readers to bring their own colour to these images. Watching *Star Wars* is an active experience, one that invites you into its world.

With this issue, we want to do the same.





WE MEET FELICITY JONES, THE BRITISH ACTOR WHO IS ADMINISTERING A SHOT OF EMOTIONAL AUTHENTICITY TO THE STAR WARS UNIVERSE AS LEAD IN ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY.

**INTERVIEW BY DAVID JENKINS
ILLUSTRATION BY LAURÈNE BOGLIO**



FIG 1. 18 JABS OF GLORY

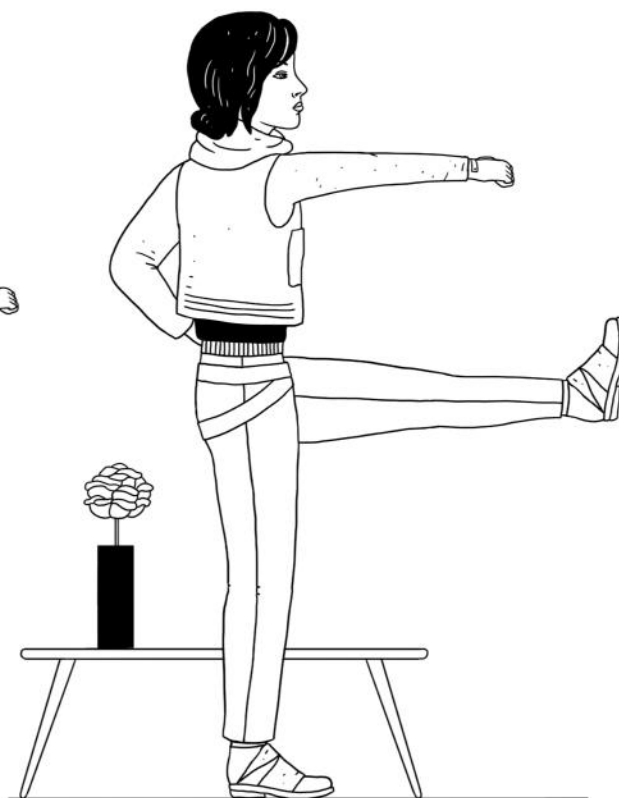


FIG 2. SEVEN STAR SQUEALER

We'll never truly know whether Felicity Jones possesses strong memories of the 2001 film *Albatross*. Unless we ask her, that is. In it, she starred as a self-hating and stifled desk clerk at a novelty hotel on the Isle of Man. She harboured pent-up desires to defy her lowly lot and attend Oxford University. It's a sweet film, but were she to create a CV which demanded she place her strongest screen credits closer to the top of the page, this one would likely rank mid-table at best.

Back then she was still habitually being referred to as an "up-and-comer" or "one to watch". She was the chalet girl from *Chalet Girl*, someone who would go on to better, brighter things (side note: *Chalet Girl* is actually quite lovely). There's a costume party scene in *Albatross* which now seems strangely prophetic. Jones is dressed in lincoln green duds as Robin Hood, while the film's lead, Jessica Brown Findlay, arrives as slut-slave Princess Leia, sporting little more than an eye-popping tangle of ornate, bejewelled bangles which extend across her unmentionables. It may have seemed like a timid pop cultural crack at the time, but now, this is Felicity Jones looking – while gasping – directly at her own future.

Okay, maybe some of the unreconstructed, petrolhead uncle attitudes that led to Leia being played out as a kiddie 'Penthouse' pet in *Return of the Jedi* have thankfully fallen by the wayside. Indeed, the latest suite of *Star Wars* movies are laudable in their enlightened, diverse casting choices. In JJ Abrams' *The Force Awakens*, women are no longer scantily clad chattel to be saved by a bluff male protector. If anything, the opposite is true – the balance isn't just being reset to neutral, but tipped in favour of the female. In less than five years since the release of *Albatross*, Jones has been cast in her own *Star Wars* story, entitled *Rogue One*. She plays Jyn Erso – a Rebel fighter out to save the universe from all hell.

Talking to Jones, there's absolutely no sense that her recent career bounce has altered any of her perceptions towards acting and the way she selects projects. She rhapsodises about the possibility of seeing big, glossy effects movies in the enshrouding dark of the multiplex. It's the right way to experience such things. But there's an impulse holding her back, like she's always cognisant of who she is and where she came from. She offers a swift counterpoint: "I also like going to the Curzon Soho and going



FIG 3. BOW STANCE, AKA JAR JAR BINX'S COLON



FIG 4. THE JOVIAL SWAN (SUDDEN DEATH)

to see tiny indie projects as well. It's tragically about to close, which is just horrible news. Let's hope it doesn't actually happen..." She trails off, ruefully.

Aside from the fact she's a quality actor, it's hard to speculate as to the exact reasons why she was cast in *Rogue One*. But it could have something to do with this sensibility of being able to exist within two worlds, extending the credibility of the arthouse and the award circuit into a digitally rendered galaxy far, far away... For too long the *Star Wars* universe has been populated by dialogue-parroting mannequins whose emotional trajectory runs the gamut of spiffed to miffed. This new phase comes with a phalanx of big guns, actors who can humanise the battle to stave of the dominance of the Dark Side. The stakes are immediately higher.

Jyn is a character who's thrown into an unexpected situation. She must lead small unit of freedom fighters on a mission to stymie the production of the planet-destroying Death Star. Like all good "men-on-a-mission" movies, she is saddled with a tumultuous past. As have all of her Rebel helpmeets. These people haven't had easy lives, and that is what has led them to war. They're united

in something they all believe in. Jyn isn't some single-serving saviour with mega-movie, laser-dodging omnipotence. "She's complicated," says Jones. "That's what I liked about her. She's resourceful. She's wilful. She also has to stand up for herself. She has empathy and affection for the team around her. But, there's a humanity to her. I hope it comes through."

It's hard to recall if Jones has ever been driven to violence on screen. Has she ever unsheathed a gun before? Has she ever struck another person? Unless there's a shameful low-rent action flick she's since omitted from her portfolio, it would appear the answer is no. For *Rogue One*, then, she started her aggression training from zero. "I was working on another film and I would meet with a Kung Fu expert in the evenings," she says. "That side of it was something I was definitely new to. But I loved it, and got more into it as we went through the filming. Doing stunts and things like that. It was really helpful for playing Jyn – it's always good to find a character's physicality. I actually learned a form of martial arts called Wushu. It takes a lot of practice. It's hours and hours of getting up early and going and rehearsing and perfecting something."

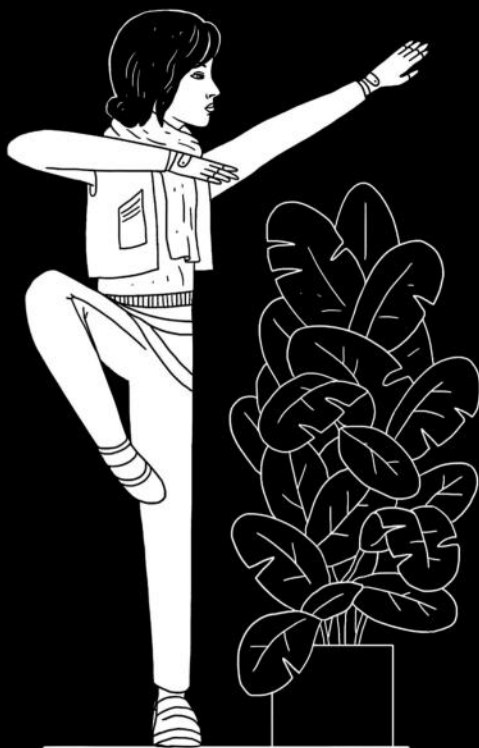


FIG 5. CRESCENT OF INCREDIBLE PAIN



FIG 6. REBEL UNICORN ON FIRE WHILE CRYING

Jones possesses the classical looks and poise of someone who existed in the 19th century. She's been at her best when playing women from the past. Her turn as Dickens' illicit lover, Nelly Turnan, in Ralph Fiennes' 2013 period feature, *The Invisible Woman*, is a model of dialled back sensitivity and classical romanticism. Her smile is immense, perhaps her greatest weapon. It makes the film's yearning sadness all the more impactful. She entered the awards fray as another woman scorned in clammy Stephen Hawkins biog, *The Theory of Everything*, from 2014. She is skilled at capturing the bliss of youth and the disappointment of old age – mature beyond her years as the cliché goes. In JA Bayona's *A Monster Calls*, she delivers an astoundingly gentle and nuanced performance as a cancer-stricken mother who is unable to say goodbye to her young son. She is the film's pulsing heart, and hopefully for that, awards contention will follow.

Making *Rogue One* was very different to the filmmaking process she had become used to. "You're not really acting, you're reacting," she says, with enthusiasm. "People can be a little bit dismissive of big budget films. But they're great because they employ hundreds and hundreds of people. And it's the detail that matters. We'd be in the ships and you can press all the buttons – they connect to things. Everything lights up. Everything actually moves." Surely that deep immersion in the world of *Star Wars* can play tricks on the mind? "I'll be talking to Diego [Luna] or Riz [Ahmed] and we'll be asking how we can play a certain scene. We'll be getting quite entrenched in discussion, and you'll look up and there's a giant monkey hanging out of a ship. Or there's a Stormtrooper walking around drinking a latte. It's this slightly dreamlike existence that you have. If you're having a particularly hard day, it's always nice to look on the call sheet and see that you've got a scene with a multi-tentacled beast."

When getting into character, actors have their own techniques that they bring with them to every movie. But the best actors are always looking to evolve, to work outside of their comfort zone. Mastering a certain style is all well and good, but it can lead to pigeonholing. Suddenly that special skill becomes a millstone around your neck, holding you back from the prospect of new challenges. Jones came on board to *Rogue One* because she had the appetite for something new, and she was a fan of director Gareth Edwards' previous films: "I really liked Gareth's approach to *Monsters*," she says. "It has this special quality to it, and it felt like you could bring a similar approach here in terms of improvising and finding a naturalism in the performances. Sometimes, on these big films, it can get very intense. The pressure can get to you. Everyone suddenly becomes very serious. And it was great to work with someone like Gareth who kept things fresh. He would always tell me to go with my instinct."

Edwards has spoken of how he wanted to use this film as a way to present *Star Wars* through a skewed, more grotty lens. The pristine, well-scrubbed fantasy of the previous films shares a platform with a mode that feels more contemporary, where you can feel the god-like hand of the filmmaker. "I feel like there's a real appetite in audiences for this kind of movie," says Jones. "We've gone through this period of being quite alienated by CGI. You lose a sense of reality, and it's hard to empathise with something that clearly isn't real. It was so important in every aspect to bring that authenticity. The Stormtroopers aren't all buffed completely white and clean. They've got scratches on them. They've been through difficult times."



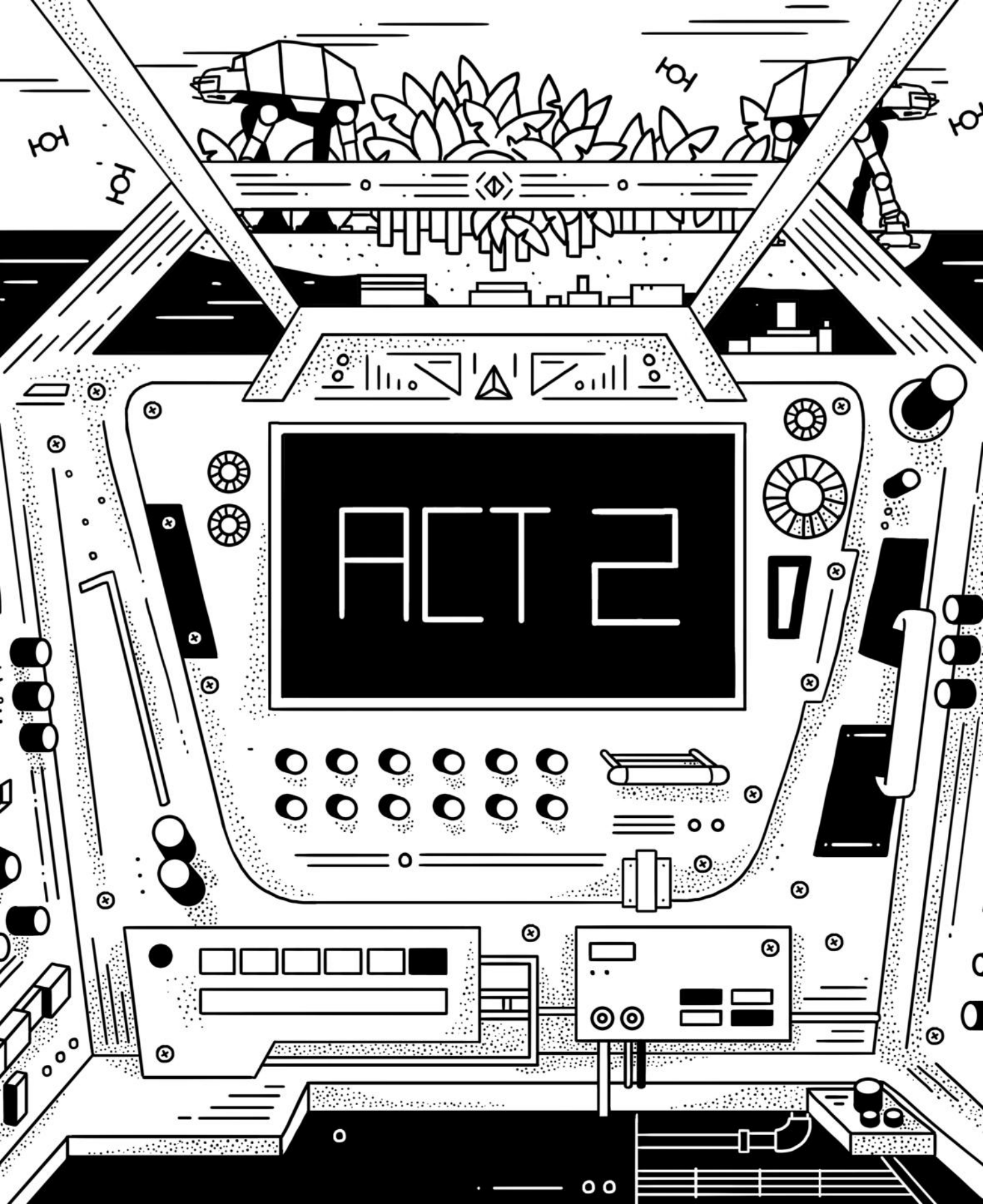
FIG 7. BRIEF REPOSE (LANDO'S TINSEL COLLECTION)

It goes without saying that once you're inducted into the extended fraternity of *Star Wars* characters, something in your life changes. Suddenly, press junkets become fan conventions. Red carpets become global, multi-platform launches. Promoting non-*Star Wars* work becomes a battle to steer the conversation away from machinations on Alderaan or what it feels like to clutch a lightsaber. Suddenly security is tighter. The act of entering a room changes. All eyes are on you. Yet there's something about Felicity Jones which makes you think that she can live with the attention. JJ Abrams kept the filming of *The Force Awakens* on total lockdown. Aside from its pair of teaser trailers, the experience of seeing the film was like being let into a cool secret or becoming part of an exclusive club. Which, ideally, is what all film viewing should feel like. It was the same deal with *Rogue One*. "You end up feeling like you're a spy or something," admits Jones. "You have to be really secretive. Your friends and family ask whether you had a nice day today, and all you can say is, 'yep! I have no follow-up to that so don't ask me!' It's really hard though. It's so exciting that I really wanted to talk about it. But the stream of consciousness has to be monitored.

"When I'm playing a character, it's always difficult for my friends and family. Slowly the Felicity they know starts to recede and Jyn starts to take over. So there's always a bit of crossover. But with Jyn it's okay as I actually want to be like her. She's pretty cool." It's funny to think about these iconic characters existing in the real world, but this overlap between the domestic and the fantastic is exactly what star and director are shooting for. She enters into a highly exclusive club of actors who get to say – with complete sincerity – the line: 'May the Force be with you.' It's a hallowed quotation that possesses the nostalgic power to drive a grown man(child) to tears. And with the weight of history behind it, surely you can't just blurt it out on the day and hope for the best. "Well no. It's one of those lines that's like, 'To be or not to be.' You've got to get it right or else you're going to feel really stupid. I spent a lot of time just walking around my house, repeating it over and over. I'd be ironing and just saying it again and again. Trying different pauses and intonations for different effect. But then when the cameras were rolling and I actually said it, I totally just channelled the Force." 🌌

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ROGUE ONE

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HARD CORPS

WOMEN IN POWER

**Rey, Jyn Erso and the
Politics of Taking Action**

WORDS BY ALEXANDRA HELLER-NICHOLAS
ILLUSTRATION BY LOLA BELTRAN



**CHERISHED CHILDHOOD MEMORIES ARE APPARENTLY
BEING LAID TO WASTE AS A RESULT OF A NEW SPATE
OF MOVIES WHICH FEATURE FEMALE CHARACTERS
WITH STRENGTH, AGENCY AND A DRIVE TO TAKE
ACTION. THE QUESTION ARISES: WHAT TOOK THEM
SO DAMN LONG? OR, HAVE THEY BEEN RIGHT THERE,
UNDER OUR NOSES, THE ENTIRE TIME?**

Outrage from a burgeoning goon squad of men's rights activists against major cinema releases that have dared to introduce strong, central women characters into previously dude-centric cult franchises has become so ubiquitous that it's now an assumed part of contemporary film discourse. *Mad Max: Fury Road*, *Ghostbusters*, *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, and now *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* have all to varying degrees sent shockwaves through these vocal communities, prompting much banging of symbolic saucepan lids from any number of social media soapboxes.

This despair seems to cluster around the question, 'where have all the "real men" gone?' The possibility that they may feel emasculated by the very beloved genre films of their youth seems only to add salt to the wound, prompting unambiguously misogynist tantrums that lean heavily upon the preciousness of their own subjective nostalgia. Exhibit A is that ugly old chestnut, the meninist war-cry that these reboots, sequels and re-imaginings are "raping" their childhood.

This same toxicity has recently riddled science fiction and fantasy literature as well. In 2015 and 2016, alt-right trolls took aim at the prestigious Hugo Awards and what they perceived as a leftist bias. Women, of course, have long had a forceful presence in this literary domain, particularly those driven by strong ideological motivations: Ursula Le Guin, Margaret Atwood and Octavia Butler to name but a few. And in film, directors including Kristina Buozyte, Kate Chaplin, Kathryn Bigelow, Jennifer Phang and Lizzie Borden have each used science fiction codes and conventions in profound and often diverse ways. But it is in front of the camera that the genre's history of strong, active women is the most visible and diverse. Heroine Maria and her evil gynoid doppelgänger in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, aggressive sexbomb Jane Fonda as the title character in Roger Vadim's *Barbarella*, turbo-mum Sarah Connor from the *Terminator* franchise, resourceful Katniss Everdeen in *The Hunger Games*, and – of course – the iconic image of the no-shit-taking woman, Sigourney Weaver's Ripley from the *Alien* movies. For starters.

But if we're going to lift the lid off of this particular Pandora's Box, it's worth doing it properly. Representations of strong women in cinema bleed outwards across eras, production contexts and the often blurry lines of film genre

itself. Any prehistory of women characters in the recent *Star Wars* movies – Rey (Daisy Ridley) from *The Force Awakens* and Jyn Erso (Felicity Jones) from *Rogue One* – must necessarily look far beyond the terrain of sci-fi itself. These two women are important symbols, however, finding themselves on the precipice between the history leading up to their positioning at the centre of their stories, and the futures (both fictional and, in terms of real world impact, ideological) that lies ahead. These characters continue a tradition of some of the most memorable and important women-of-action in the cinema as their journeys take them on a kind of subjective, individualised process of militarisation. These are women who consciously implement an often systematic approach to Taking Action, rather than merely performing acts.

Feminist Politics in Space

In the case of *Star Wars*, it would be difficult not to trace the franchise's interest in strong women back to Princess Leia and Padmé (Leia's ideologically klutzy slave-bikini phase aside), but it is obviously with *The Force Awakens'* Rey that women moved to the frontlines of the action-and-empathy stakes. Yet Leia's trajectory itself is telling: she does not evolve from a Princess to a Queen as regal logic would commonly dictate, but from a Princess to a General. Real princesses don't sit back on thrones, symbolic or literal. They lock, they load, they mobilise the troops.

Acts of feminist mobilisation – be they formal or informal – are vital to women like Leia, Rey and *Rogue One's* Jyn. Accusations of Rey's Mary Sueism – a female character type whose strength is deemed too idealised, too unrealistic – fall flat in the face of what was clearly years of self-training and disciplined preparation off-camera before the action of *The Force Awakens* played out. Her marking off days, scratched into the wall of her abandoned Walker-home, show a woman strategically preparing in wait, her dedication to up-skilling finally paying off when snowman droid-child BB-8 arrives, kicking off her intergalactic adventures.



In *Rogue One*, Jyn is a defiant outsider who, by joining the Rebel Alliance, underscores the symbolic power of their very name: a mobilised space where non-conformist dissidents must find a way to work together. But like *The Force Awakens*, the challenge for *Rogue One* is to find a way to continue consolidating its mythology. Juggling the franchise's overarching narrative with its broader, iconic pop cultural potency, the trick is to keep older fans happy without becoming stagnant, either ideologically or narratively. Characters like Jyn and Rey might offer new perspectives to new audiences, but they also recall older ways of women in film rallying to action.

Wild West, Wild Women

Even the very description of Star Wars historically as a 'space western' offers a potent starting place to look for the ancestors of cinema's mobilised women-of-action. They are, on the surface at least, not difficult to find: contemporary examples might lead us to Sharon Stone's Ellen in Sam Raimi's *The Quick and the Dead* (1995) or Michelle Williams in Kelly Reichardt's *Meek's*

Cutoff (2010), but the reigning queen of tough western women is still Joan Crawford's Vienna in *Johnny Guitar* (1954). Although a tough-as-nails saloonkeeper clad in masculine-styled attire, with Crawford's signature curves and ambient sexuality, Vienna is anything but tomboyish. Surrounded by challenges on all fronts, Crawford's steady gaze (and steadier gun) create in Vienna one of the most resilient and determined women the genre has ever offered. Yet for Vienna and so many of her western women allies, challenges result not only from the struggles inherent to life on the Frontier, but – more often than not – complications arising from gender difference, often directed at them from lovers, would-be-paramours, husbands or bastard exes.

While gender often does not rank highly on the list of concerns for women in westerns, men in these films often feel quite different. Survival therefore frequently demands they tackle how their own femininity (or lack thereof) is received by the men (and sometimes other, more orthodox women) whose stories intersect with their own. When women like these mobilise, pick up a gun, and take action, the perils of frontier living often becomes a metaphor for patriarchy itself, in all its myriad guises.

Although such claims would be difficult to make for all westerns, this tendency in some is complicated further in the case of the girl-gang subgenre. Often used as a way to

“In terms of pure action, of course, few women are as iconic as Pam Grier, a figure who not only embodied the tough, mobilised, strategic woman of action, but also framed her refusal to back down as one inextricably linked to race as much as gender.”

add some brute force sexy pizzazz to a genre whose codes are traditionally heavily masculinised. Jonathan Kaplan's 1994 film *Bad Girls* is a case in point: what had the potential to be a powerful film about feminist unity collapsed into what critic Janet Maslin memorably described at the time as a film with, “all the legitimacy of Cowpoke Barbie with a lot less entertainment value”. At the same time, the rallying of women in these contexts to band together and to fight back, to stake a claim in a cultural and social space of their own offers further evidence of the broad ways women have found to mobilise power through taking action across genre.

Tough Girls and Vengeful Women

This becomes thornier in the case of the notorious rape-revenge film category: if there was one instance of the explicit transformation of women's emotional and physical energy into direct political action, this would surely be it. It is therefore no surprise that rape-revenge and the western have such a long affiliation, despite the latter (erroneously) being so closely aligned with horror traditions. From *The Bravados* (Henry King, 1958) and *Last Train from Gun Hill* (John Sturges, 1959) to women-driven narratives like *Hannie Caulder* (Burt Kennedy, 1971), sexual violence and a thirst for vengeance marks many westerns.

In rape-revenge films with women protagonists more generally, gender difference and links to violence and power are

key, from Meir Zarchi's broadly despised 1978 exploitation film *I Spit on Your Grave* to Jonathan Demme's Oscar-winning Jodie Foster vehicle from 1988, *The Accused*. What is of interest here is how sexual violence mobilises a particular kind of feminist action in the rape-avenging woman protagonist, like some kind of ideological alchemy: rape 'turns' women into 'feminists'. Girl-gang centred rape-revenge films complicate this: while more famous instances of female-avenger rape-revenge films find their protagonists isolated by their desire for vengeance, there are a number of straight-to-video, forgotten grindhouse films and TV movies examples that show women coming together, actively building feminist networks. Both these models, however, are based on women turning to mobilised, strategic action. What marks them as different from someone like Rey in particular, however, is the emphasis on their gender difference.

In terms of pure action, of course, few women are as iconic as Pam Grier, a figure who not only embodied the tough, mobilised, strategic woman of action, but also framed her refusal to back down as one inextricably linked to race as much as gender. Less well known is Cynthia Rothrock, an extraordinarily gifted martial artist who took her abilities in a range of martial disciplines to the screen, becoming a cult actor in almost 50 movies. Postfeminist 'kick ass' girl movies were soon to become the norm – from the feature length reboot of *Charlie's Angels* to Quentin Tarantino's revival of the trope in *Kill Bill* and *Death Proof* in particular. Tarantino regular stuntwoman-turned-actor Zoe Bell would continue to define the mobilised woman-of-action in films like 2013's *Raze*, and this figure is closely linked in the broader cultural imagination to videogame adaptations like Angelina Jolie in the *Tomb Raider* films and Milla Jovovich in the *Resident Evil* franchise.



The Pop Culture Feminist Corps

Yet these precursors to Rey and Jyn are significant as much for where they deviate as merge. While the complexity of the Bechdel Test (a pop-cultural monitor of a film's feminist credentials) is hardly demanding, as an ideological parlour game it certainly raises awareness of how women's stories have traditionally been framed, their stories aligned far too often by those of the men around them. Images of the mobilised woman-of-action are diverse, and movies that address how women fit into explicit military contexts suggest that progress is not to be made by simply putting a woman in uniform and giving her a gun. The overwrought butchness of Demi Moore's *GI Jane* or Goldie Hawn's bumbling-princess-makes-good might be strong women, but are hardly the first that leap to mind.

Rather than an explicitly militarised imagination, then, Rey and Jyn suggest a turn to a type of 'feminist corps' motif, typified by that great forgotten icon of '90s feminism, *Tank Girl*, who was played to joyful precision by Lori Petty in Rachel Talalay's 1995 film. Kate McKinnon's Jillian Holtzmann in the recent *Ghostbusters* reboot prompted a revisit to the precise kind of

power *Tank Girl* represented, a kind of punk, post-feminist spirit of anarchy and determination. Like Rey and Jyn, these are not Action Women in the strictly generic sense, but rather something more important: they are Women Who Take Action.

This distinction lies at the core of *The Force Awakens*, and like it, *Rogue One* must find a way to maintain a sense of loyalty to the broader *Star Wars* mythology without collapsing into regressive, nostalgia-for-nostalgia's sake images of women who sit around waiting to be rescued. Rey did this by staking a claim in her right to her own story, her own skills and her ability to strategise and execute her actions. That Rey is a scavenger who repurposed *mise en scène* from the earlier films is no small coincidence: like *Tank Girl* on *Ambien*, her very habitat, her very appearance was governed by a retrospective punk feminist DIY aesthetic.

Looking back at Women Who Take Action throughout film history and forward to the role they play in the unfolding *Star Wars* series, women like Rey and Jyn demand we ask important questions: What can we salvage? What can we take back? What can we keep and repurpose as we move forward, and what don't we need anymore? It seems, from this perspective, only inevitable that some conservative feathers will get ruffled. But we will keep looking – as Han Solo told Finn in *The Force Awakens*, "women always figure out the truth" 🌟



HOW STAR WARS BECAME INSTRUMENTAL IN KICK-STARTING THE PORN PARODY INDUSTRY.

WORDS BY JUSTINE SMITH • ILLUSTRATION BY CHOPPINGJERKS

As one of the most pervasive pop cultural icons of the past one hundred years, *Star Wars* has offered up ripe material for all kinds of mockery. One of those, inevitably, was the time-honoured porn parody. The first wave of parody pornography arrived in the 1970s when American obscenity laws had softened to the point where major cities were able to screen feature length erotica such as *Deep Throat*, *Debbie Does Dallas* and *The Devil in Miss Jones*. The landscape of pornography, which was once hidden away behind closed doors, was suddenly out in the open. While the majority of audiences were still wary to be associated with an industry tied to the counterculture and, often, the Mafia, those sitting on the fence appeared to find pornography wrapped up in a light comedy narrative more socially acceptable.

Since then, there have been at least two major waves of popularity for the porn parody, each one imbued with increased sophistication. In an industry currently competing with endless stores of gratis online pornography, a well-made porn parody of a popular television series or movie has proven to be lucrative. Speaking with Adult Video Network, Jeff Mullen of X-Play explained the genre's appeal: "We got an entirely new segment of people that were willing to buy porn that didn't ever walk into a porn shop or order online before," he says. "They wanted to see *The Brady Bunch* porn, they wanted to see *Three's Company* porn." While most porn is easily consumed on free tube websites, there is a novel appeal in owning a parody of your favourite movie or TV show, even potentially driving up sales of the original property.

Companies like X-Play focus on parodying pop culture that has cross-generational appeal. Products like *Star Wars* and *The Brady Bunch* were able to connect with as wide an audience as possible. While there have been similar porn parodies of recent political events, such as Hustler's infamous 2008 film, *Who's Nailin' Paylin?*, they don't command the same budget or sustainable audience as a popular television programme. The high production values of some of these films have meant that most DVDs are bundled with alternative versions with the adult sections edited out so that home viewers can enjoy the parody without the sex.

The appeal of porn parodies for a wide audience satisfies two impulses: it indulges in a fantasy of having your favourite characters get it on and it also engages with pornography as a group experience. It offers viewers an opportunity to be 'naughty' and watch porn with their friends while having the comedy offset much of the discomfort. Comedy, horror and pornography have long occupied a similar space in the cinematic landscape where they reach for visceral reactions.

Where fear and laughter are socially sanctioned, arousal is not. Matching pornography with comedy means laughter overrides the most uncomfortable elements associated with sexual desire. Offsetting the real implications of wanting to watch pornography, it allows viewers to dip their toes in titillation without the shame of admitting they want to get off. Porn parodies have come to occupy that same cultural space as the people who used to read *Playboy* "for the articles."

More so than any other sub-genre of pornography, the parody occupies the most accepted space in the mainstream. Aside from other obvious gimmicks, it might be the only kind of pornography that is regularly reviewed by the mainstream press. Websites such as the Splitsider cover porn parodies in columns like 'This is Research' where Sarah Schneider reviews popular titles as *The Big Lebowski: A XXX Parody* and *This Ain't Ghostbusters XXX*. Focused as much on comedy as sex, she unveils the curious appeal of the genre. In her first entry, on the *30 Rock* parody, she asks "Why do these films exist? Who watches them?" Over the course of about a dozen columns, it becomes evident that the veil of parody allows Schneider to also talk about the representation of sex in a real and almost banal way. At different moments she discusses camera angles, body parts and dirty talk (objecting especially to this line from *Seinfeld XXX*, "I wanna drink you. I wanna have you in my tummy.")

Over the past few decades, pornography has only increased its presence in cultural and social circles. It does, however, remain a solitary and uncritical enterprise. Most discussions of porn are reduced to a question of ethics, while the discussions of artistic or even titillating merits saddle up with Justice Potter Stewart's 1964 proclamation in the landmark *Jacobellis v Ohio* obscenity ruling: "I know it when I see it." It almost seems unquestionable in 2016 that a film like Louis Malle's notorious 1958 work, *Les Amants*, would be subject to an obscenity case, but what kind of critical advancements have we made since then in the discussion of eroticism and sex on screen?

As filmmakers like Gaspar Noé and Catherine Breillat tease the boundary between obscenity and art, it seems pornographers are doing the same. Porn parodies which bridge the gap between gratification and entertainment might actually offer an opening for critical engagement with pornography. In pornography and beyond, issues of desire and sexuality still seem glossed over, in particular in terms of aesthetics and thematic implication. As these filmmakers themselves strive to create better products, some of which are presented sans sex, this should be seen as a challenge to critics to follow suit and flex their sexual imagination in writing about eroticism on screen.



A GUIDE TO FIVE DECADES OF

STAR WARS PORN PARODY

Star Babe

RELEASED: 1977

Set in 2080, *Star Babe* was released the same year as *A New Hope*. In the film, three sparkle covered Star Babes are sent to Planet Phallus where they need to recover some secret plans and prevent an alien takeover of planet earth. Very tangentially a parody of *Star Wars*, the movie does feature a Darth Vader costume, a stormtrooper mask and a cantina scene. Neither funny nor particularly sexy. It's certainly an oddity in the annals of cheaply made pornography of the 1970s. Extreme close-ups that completely abstract the body parts and actions they portray seem like a bizarre relic of the avant-garde rather than an erotic impulse. Disembodied genitals peek out of cheap Halloween costumes (including a gorilla, a werewolf, and Nixon) and are matched with the performers' nonsensical impersonations of classic Universal monsters. With a mercifully short running time, this parody is a great document more than a great film.

Sex Wars

RELEASED: 1985

Sex Wars is perhaps the most famous of the first wave of *Star Wars* parody films. Made just a few years after the release of *Return of the Jedi*, it arrived during the perfect storm of most SW superfans hitting early adulthood with the newfound accessibility of the VHS tape. Running up against what will become a major problem in most of these parody films, the movie splits the role of Leia over several women, making up for the gender disparity of the original series. Familiar as both pornography and parody, the movie has recognisable *Star Wars* iconography such as Admiral Ackbar and the crawling text that goes on and on and on. Remarkably, the film does have some expressionistic edges, including a blowjob intercut with a percolating volcano. And, in a subversive move, rather than shy away from the underlying incest inherent Luke and Leia's sexual attraction, *Sex Wars* embraces it.

Space Nuts

RELEASED: 2003

This seems to be more of a riff on *Spaceballs* than *Star Wars*, which make it a porn parody of a parody. Running at nearly three hours, the film features not only a whole lot more sex than the other films, but far more plot as well. Seemingly made by cinephiles, *Space Nuts* takes as many hits at Kubrick as it does *Star Wars*, including a funny extended sequence with Hal from *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Fitting in as many sex jokes as possible (this is episode 69 and is centred on a ball-shaped chin Palpatine knock-off and Princess Hubaba), the combined running time of all the sex scenes eclipse the two previous parodies combined. The sex scenes often seem dropped in rather than integrated, and, inexplicably, all feature an overwhelming guitar shredding soundtrack. Hardly great cinema, this one is fun, though way too bogged down with lifeless and uninspired grinding.

Star Wars XXX

RELEASED: 2012

With ritzier production values than most mid-2000s parody films, *Star Wars XXX* manages to transcend pornography. With genuine laughs and a sophisticated sexiness, it is perhaps the only *Star Wars* porno where the performers don't break character once they undress. Rather than just rely on cheap gags and heavy winks, the movie imagines a *Star Wars* universe where the characters have real erotic desires and it builds off that premise. The filmmaking itself is surprisingly sophisticated and relies not only on sexual puns but visual gags, including a funny take on Vader's overzealous and ineffective force choke. With a charming script and decent-to-good performances, *Star Wars XXX* is emblematic of the porn parody as a communal experience. Salacious enough to be exciting and commendably fast paced, the film appeals directly to fans and also operates as a diversionary social experience. Big thumbs up.

Little White Lies

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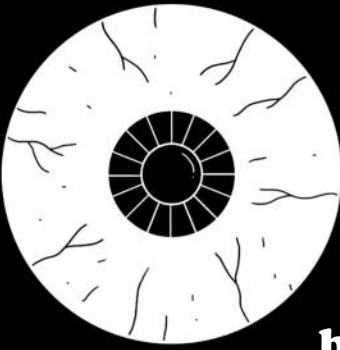
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**INSIDE THE HYPER-CHARGED MIND OF THE
ROGUE ONE DIRECTOR, GARETH EDWARDS**

THE LAST DETAIL

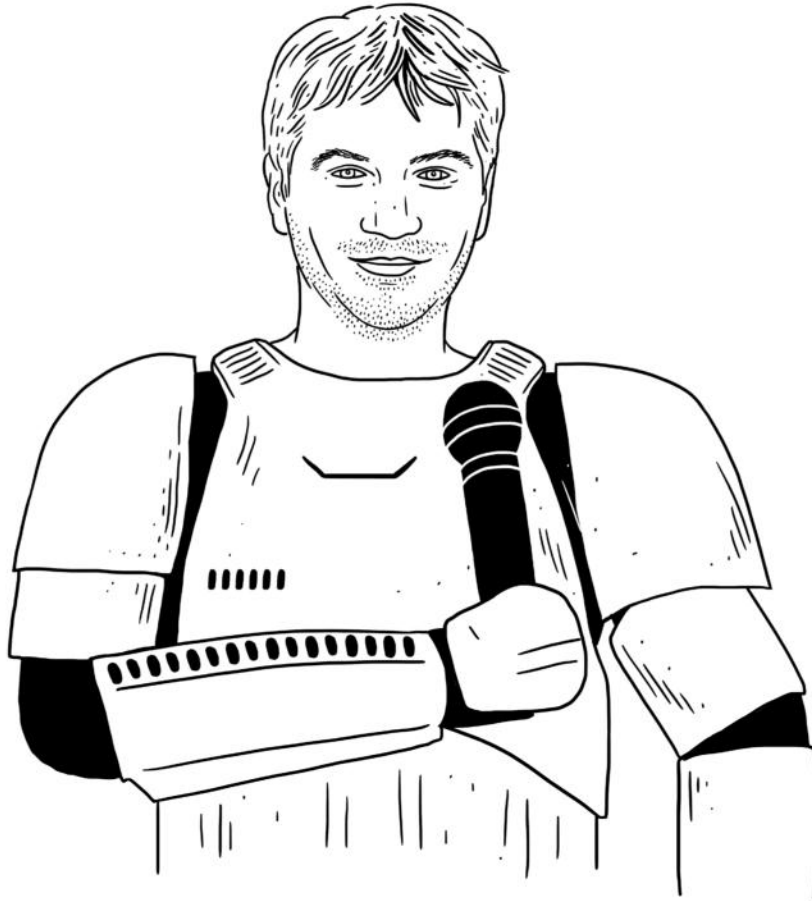
**INTERVIEW BY DAVID JENKINS
ILLUSTRATION BY LAURÈNE BOGLIO**





Let's get the love-in out of the way early – British effects whiz-turned-expert blockbuster builder Gareth Edwards is one of our favourites. Everything was right there in his 2010 debut feature, *Monsters*, which fuses together a rough-hewn, semi-improvised realism with gorgeous, computer generated, hovering glow-in-the-dark squids. It was a low-budget labour of love which looked like it cost at least 50 times its minuscule \$500,000 budget. Hollywood was watching, and it wasn't long before Evans was over at Warner Brothers and handed the keys to a *Godzilla* reboot. The result remains one of the most majestic, awe-inspiring blockbusters of the modern age, an exemplary fusion of the classical disaster movie conventions with action sequences which often take on a near-experimental quality. Here was a director with the ability to personalise the impersonal, to stamp his imprint on a giant, looming edifice.

And now, Edwards has somehow tramped even higher up the mountain. *Rogue One* is the first of what is set to be a series of Star Wars “stories”, spinning out from the original, canonical saga. The film concerns a gang of rebel fighters, which includes Felicity Jones' Jyn Erso, who are out to nab the blueprints for an under-construction Death Star. We spoke to Edwards about how he goes about making films on such a grand scale, and how he was able to pay lip service to George Lucas's vision while adding something new and vital to the mix.



LWLies: *Godzilla* and *Monsters* were both slow-burn films which teased the audience with effects and a gradual crescendo. Have you done the same with *Rogue One*?

Edwards: You'd have to tell me. When we filmed *Monsters*, it was very organic, or whatever words you wanna use. It was opportunistic. It was a bit of a freeform thing: this is kind of the scene; this is kind of the idea. Just do what you want to do, and we'll try and find the beauty in it. *Godzilla* was the polar opposite of that, so it was setting every single shot up, then putting marks on the floor and everyone has to hit them. It feels very contrived in my mind. And so, on this, I wanted to find that happy balance between the Hollywood approach to things and a more independent, freewheeling vibe.

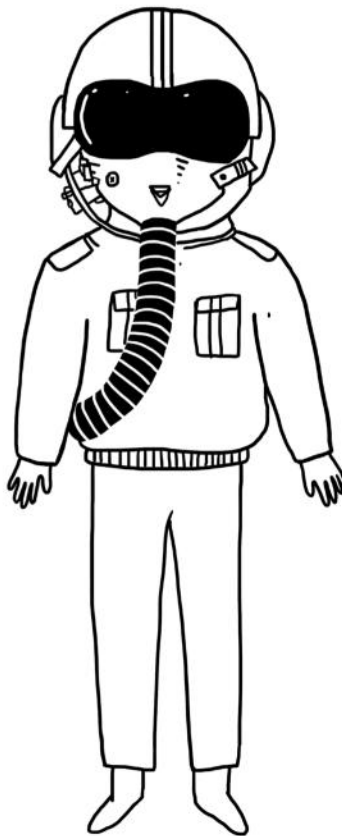
What do you mean when you say 'Hollywood?'

The idea of storyboarding everything. You stand there, you say that line, you walk to that corner, you look out there. It's very controlled and structured. It's great, in a sense, as nearly all of the classic

blockbuster films are born out of that style. When I was doing visual effects, I learned that the thing that's most exciting is when you find the thing you weren't thinking of. Otherwise, all a film can ever be is what you've pictured in your head. As great as anyone might think they are, there's a limit to what that picture can really be. The more you can add some of your own DNA to the mix the better. Fracture it. Try and create happy accidents. Suddenly you get things that are way better than you pictured. We tried to inject that approach into this film.

How do you create a happy accident?

Let me give you an example: there's an area in the film called Jedah. We had a set that was 360 degrees. You normally have a bunch of background artists, and when you say action they walk from left to right. And when you say cut, everything is reset and you start over again. On this, we wanted it to feel like a real market. So instead of walking left to right, everyone had to learn what they did for a living. Like, they sold fruit on a stall, or they were an inspector...



So everyone had their own little imaginary things that I had no idea about. These thoughts were theirs. It meant that they could keep going forever. So we could film and not have to cut. We could look in every direction. The assistant directors are the ones who are running around in the background and if they're not careful they get into shot – they wore costumes so they could walk into shot and not be seen. As a result, we ended up in this situation where the actors could go in and do their scene, but we could also find the beauty in it.

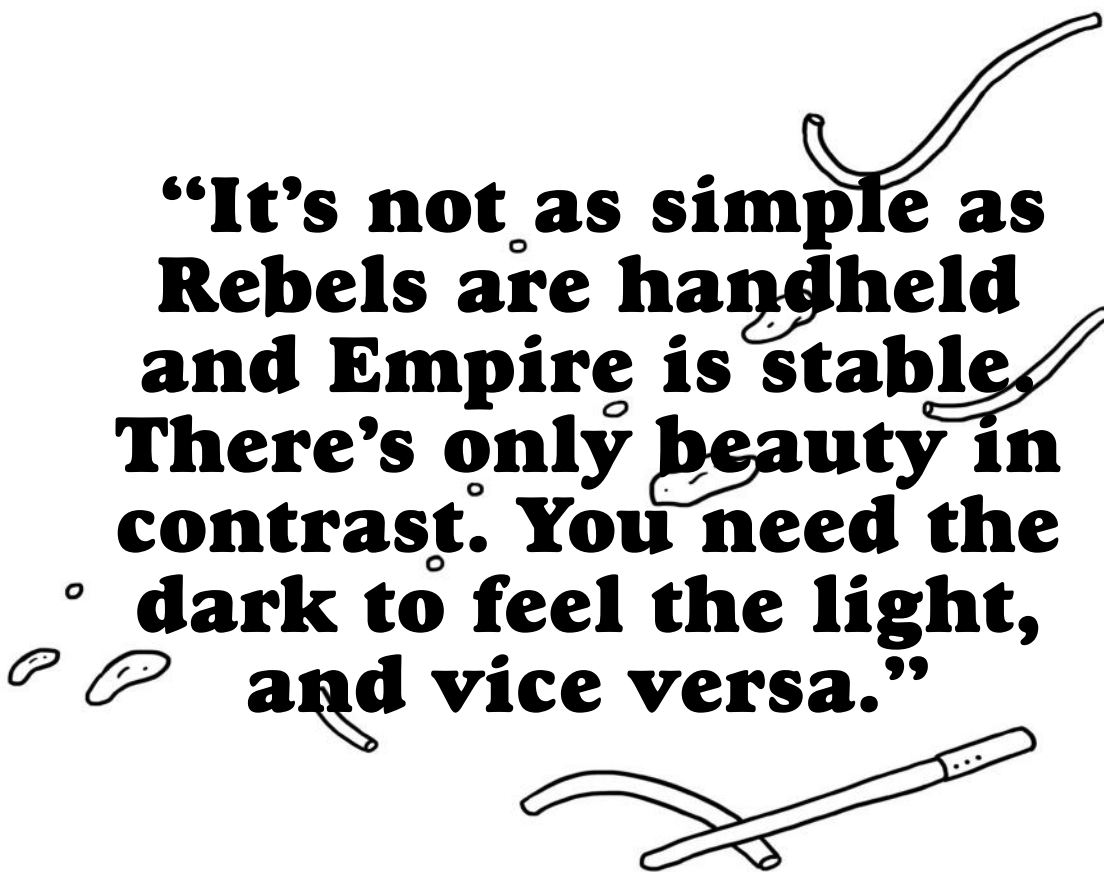
It feels more like the approach of an arthouse director than someone making a *Star Wars* movie.

It would've been impossible to do this for the whole film. There were scenes inside spaceships and we had 180 degree LED screens. The flight path of the ship was pre-animated, and the whole thing was on hydraulics. We'd get locked inside, not come out for an hour and get very sweaty and hot. But we could just go again and again and again. I think that effect of being held hostage inside a tin can like that added to the performance.

I don't know... It's much more for people like you to say. We were just trying to do it whenever we could. There's definitely lots and lots of shots in the film where I could say to you, 'We never contrived that at all. That is just Diego [Luna] exhausted and on his knees and we suddenly ran around with the camera and got this shot.' I never asked for that, but I'm so glad it happened. It's a moment by moment thing.

You've talked about Alejandro González Iñárritu as being an inspiration on how you approached this. Is it possible to achieve that level of realism in the *Star Wars* universe?

I think if we weren't doing this as a stand-alone movie, then probably not. But, what was good about being a spin-off was that we had a licence – if not a mandate – to be different. What is that difference? I just wanted things to be more natural. There's no part of me that doesn't watch those original films in total awe. Every one is a masterpiece. It's not like there's something you can do that's better than that. I want people to feel when they're watching *Rogue One* that they are really going to these places.



**“It’s not as simple as
Rebels are handheld
and Empire is stable.
There’s only beauty in
contrast. You need the
dark to feel the light,
and vice versa.”**

What about the original, classical fantasy style forged by George Lucas?

We are doing that too – the very classical, epic, considered and controlled '70s Spielbergian old school style. We tried our best to mix and match things. And that's one of the things I like about the film – that there's the contrast between those two styles. That quick gear change keeps everything fresh. And it's not as simple as Rebels are handheld and Empire is stable. There's only beauty in contrast. You need the dark to feel the light, and vice versa.

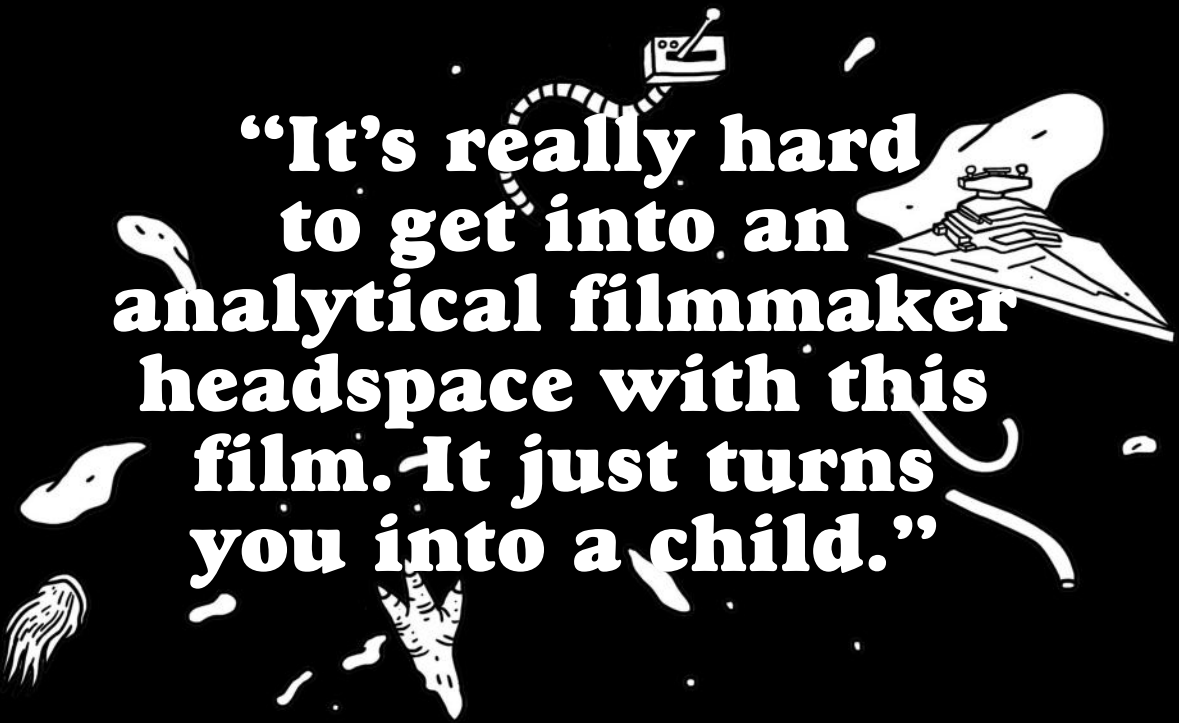
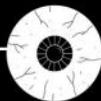
From when you got the job to direct *Rogue One*, what was it then like to going and re-watching the original films?

I was terrified that it was going to ruin them for me. *Star Wars* has always been something that I could just put on. It always gives me goose bumps and it always reminds me why I love cinema. Then I think, what if I could never look at them again in the same way? As of today, it hasn't changed any of that.

When you went back and watched the original films did you take copious notes?

On day one, we were in Lucasfilm in San Francisco with Industrial Light and Magic and John Knowles, our supervisor, he said that they've got a brand new 4K restoration print of *A New Hope* – it had literally just been finished. He suggested we sit and watch it. Obviously, I was up for that. Me, the writer, lots of the story people and John all sat down, we all had our little notepads, we were all ready for this.

I'll add that I've seen *A New Hope* hundreds of times. So I was sat there, ready to take notes and really delve under the surface of the film. You have the Fox fanfare, then scrolling text with 'A long time ago...', and then the main music begins. Next thing we knew it had ended, and we looked around to one another and just thought – shit, we didn't take any notes. You can't watch it without getting carried away. It's really hard to get into an analytical filmmaker headspace with this film. It just turns you into a child.



**“It’s really hard
to get into an
analytical filmmaker
headspace with this
film. It just turns
you into a child.”**

One thing that *Star Wars* does amazingly well is the character entrance. As a director, how do you choreograph a great entrance?

You can film a character entrance, but you can get to the edit and find that you can’t use it. It might take too much screen time to show that person in the way that you had planned. You have to cut and they’re on screen. There’s a particular character entrance in the film that I’m very proud of. It had to be special. And it’s probably obvious who it is.

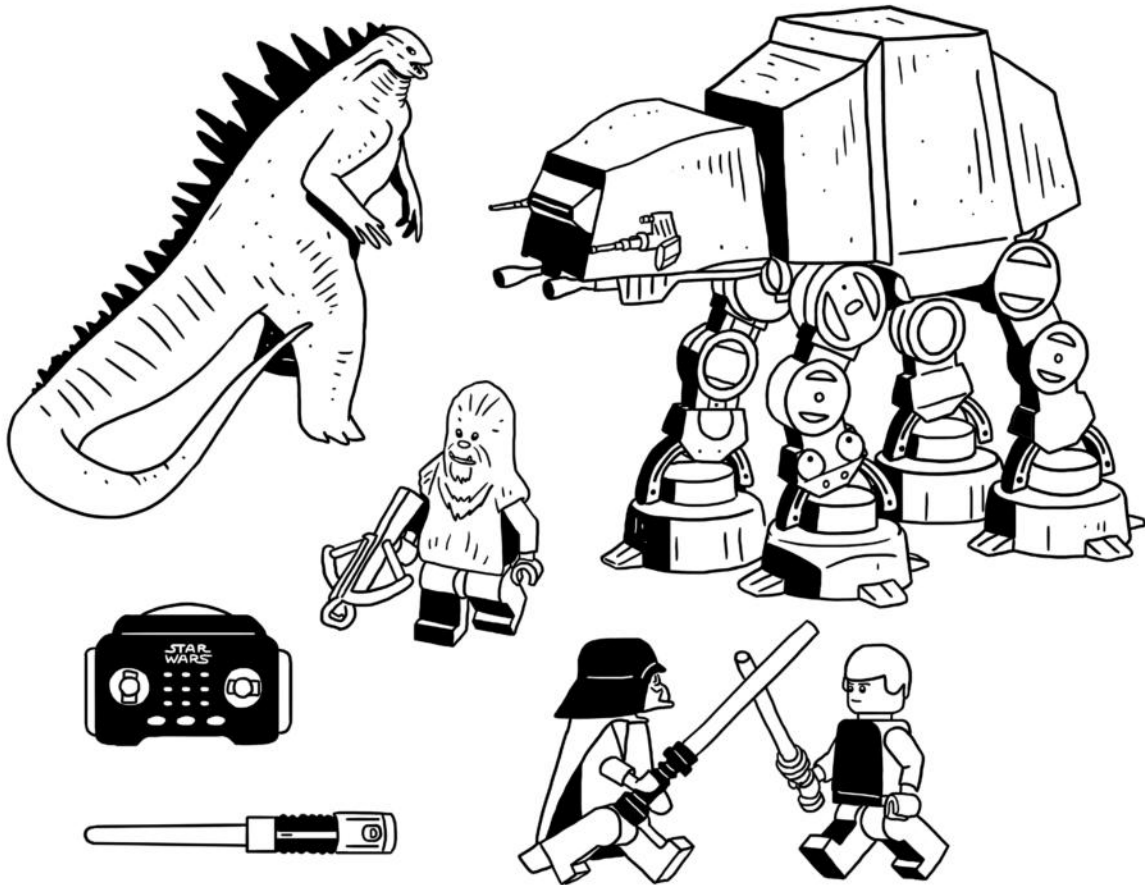
How do you build those sequences?

It’s... a bit like the stops on a Tube map. Or connecting dots. You know what the story is, and you try and come up with visuals that are memorable and feel right. You come up with loads of them. An insane amount. And then you try to connect them in a scene. How can we get from this point to this destination, and go via here, here and here? Making a movie is about finding a path. What can happen is that, because you’re being visually led through a story, it’s not

always the right approach. A film is like a child that you’ve raised to be a lawyer, but the child turns around and says it wants to be a fighter pilot. At a certain point, a film tells you what it needs to be. You just try and feed it ideas. And even though it will reject some of them, it’s nothing personal. It’s like a reflex reaction.

Is it always you who can see when something doesn’t work or do you have other people to look out for that?

People tend to be the ones look out for that. But there’s stuff that I’ll reject because I just won’t want it in the film. It doesn’t feel right. There were occasions where people said you don’t need this or that, and I held on to it. The downside is, if you have an object and everyone takes away everything they don’t like, if there’s enough people, you end up with a sphere every time – no edges, nothing of interest. I always try and take everything with a pinch of salt. Stay open minded and honest, but don’t lose the drive to make something unique. Honestly, it’s such a mindfuck. Right there, in those details, is the difference between making a good film or a bad one.



From the way you're talking, those micro decisions would seem to be cripplingly stressful.

On *Star Wars* they are, because they last forever. For instance, the toys that get made. Say you're designing a gun, and you come to a button on the gun and you're thinking about the way it clicks. If you get into the detail of that stuff with the props people, you just think, stop being such an idiot, no one is going to see or care about this. But as soon as you say that, you remember: this is *Star Wars*, of course they're going to see it and care about it. If you've done your job properly, people are going to be looking at that helmet for long time, not just for a split second on screen. It might end up on a t-shirt. You've got to be hard on it.

How difficult a task is it to always keep one eye on the bigger picture?

There's two modes: you have the macro mode where you're looking at structural stuff and pure story, then once you've got

that right, you can zoom in to the micro mode. But it's always possible that you zoom in too early – you can spend ages ironing out a scene, making it perfect, and then you zoom back out and realise you don't even need it. You've just wasted a week. I think I'm a little autistic about visuals. I find it hard to let go.

Could you have spent an infinite amount of time making this movie?

Yeah. I really don't know when you would reach the point on a *Star Wars* movie and think, 'Done! Finished! Nothing left to do here.' Even George couldn't let go. I think the originals are masterpieces, so why do you need the special editions? You did it. You achieved the Holy Grail. And yet, he doesn't feel that way about it because they're his babies. He was picturing something slightly better. That's the curse of making films. It's really hard to have feelings about them the same way you do for other people's films, because you're too close. We definitely aimed really high on this. But thank god there's a release date, otherwise I'd still be there, doing it, forever 🌀

THE CHOSEN ONE

LIKE THE AGENCIES WHO SCOUT FOR POTENTIAL SUPERHEROES, SUPERHERO MOVIE PRODUCERS KEEP THEIR EYE OUT FOR POTENTIAL INDUCTEES INTO THEIR COVETED STABLE. DOCTOR STRANGE DIRECTOR SCOTT DERRICKSON EXPLAINS HOW HE SNUCK THROUGH THE GIGANTIC FRONT GATES OF THE MARVEL CINEMATIC UNIVERSE.

WORDS BY SCOTT DERRICKSON (AS TOLD TO DAVID JENKINS)
ILLUSTRATION BY SHARM MURUGIAH

First things first, blockbusters take a long time to make. But, all movies tend to have the same kind of problems. You never have enough time and you never have enough money whether you're shooting 90 days or 25 days. The biggest difference between making a small movie and a movie this size – a Marvel movie – is the number of creative things that you have to juggle simultaneously. The challenge is to take all of those things – especially the technical and visual effects – and remain focussed on storytelling. It's very easy to lose sight of the story, to lose sight of the centrality of the performances and actors. Because, in the end, the audience are really watching the same thing as in a low-budget movie: how you tell the story and how you present the characters. That's what matters.

For a film like *Sinister*, I had absolute creative control. I never took any notes on the script. I just went and made the movie the way I wanted to make it. That's very unique. I made a direct-to-video movie before that. It was a studio movie and their involvement was significant. It's not true, necessarily, that the bigger the movie the more studio involvement there is. Marvel is a company that functions differently from other studios. Marvel have a process and methodology that's unique in terms of their creative involvement. I found – and I'm really not just saying this – nothing but positivity, because they're not studio of executives, they're a studio of artists. And really good ones.

When you sign up to a Marvel movie, you're signing up to something that has a certain kind of tone. But they're very respectful of their directors. *Guardians of the Galaxy* is an off-piste movie. I don't think anybody in the world could have written or directed it other than James Gunn. I think *The Avengers* was a complete reflection of its maker, Joss Whedon, even though he was dealing with characters that were already established. So I made *Doctor Strange* more grounded and serious than most Marvel movies. That's the kind of work that I've done in the past: performance-orientated, supernatural moviemaking. That's what my career has been. That's why I was hired.

There were a lot of directors chasing this job. From my understanding, there were more directors coming after

Doctor Strange than any Marvel movie in the past. I had been approached a long time ago about possibly coming in and talking about *Thor*. I grew up reading Marvel comics and *Thor* was never one of my favourite comics. I went and read a bunch of them and was like, 'this is not for me'. I did not know how they were going to pull off a comic, movie version of 'Thor'. What they did was an incredibly shrewd but exciting thing: they hired a Shakespearean director [Kenneth Branagh]. It's one of the reasons why that movie worked, and why *Thor* is now one of the great characters of the MCU. But Marvel don't chase the "hot" directors. They watch filmmakers and pay attention to sensibility. When I went and met with them for the first time, it was the first of eight meetings I took. Eight.

Each meeting became more presentational as we went along. The first one was more me talking about the character. They had very general ideas about what the movie should be, and I had very strong opinions because I loved the comics. Over the next seven meetings I came back with a very fixed vision of what the movie should be. Frankly, I spent a lot of money on the visual presentations. I didn't have to but I did, because I was determined to get the job. That's the other thing, they definitely respond to passion. They don't hire IMDb pages. They don't operate out of fear, which I think is behind a lot of the decision making processes within Hollywood. They don't hire a director just because his last movie was a hit. I was an unlikely candidate to get *Doctor Strange*, but I think I came in with the most specific, impassioned vision for the movie. And that's what they were looking for.

When I say 'they', I mean Kevin Feige, who is the head of Marvel. He is the creative genius – I use that word literally. Louis D'Esposito, who also runs the company. Stephen Broussard was my 'Marvel guy', my producer on set. In the entire time I worked there, these were the people and I dealt with. Everything I have done is a process that goes through those doors. It's a very concentrated group of people who have really only one interest in mind. And that's the film itself. They love movies, and I've never felt any pressure to do anything other than make the best film possible 🍿

— DOCTOR STRANGE IS IN CINEMAS NOW —



JABBA THE HUTT'S FAVOURITE DISCO SONG

THE STORY OF THE CONTROVERSIAL STAR WARS FLOOR-FILLER BY THE PEOPLE WHO WROTE IT.

WORDS BY CIAN TRAYNOR • ILLUSTRATION BY KYLE PLATTS

In 1983, John Williams and George Lucas dreamed up an intergalactic disco jam to score a key sequence in *Return of the Jedi*. It takes place in Jabba the Hutt's throne room – a nefarious den of otherworldly misfits – moments before a disguised Princess Leia shows up to rescue Han Solo.

To set the tone, a group of 'jizz-wailers' (an official term from the 'Stars Wars Encyclopedia') known as the Max Rebo Band perform a song called 'Lapti Nek' for Jabba's amusement. It's gritty, sleazy and shares a horn blast with Rick James' funk classic 'Give It to Me Baby' – exactly the kind of sound you'd expect a slug-like crime boss to be into.

To help write the song, Williams called on his 22-year-old son Joseph – who would later become the frontman of rock band Toto, best known for '80s hits 'Africa', 'Hold the Line' and 'Rosanna'.

"It was basically my father throwing me a bone," says Williams. "George asked him for two sound cues ['Lapti Nek' and 'Ewok Celebration'] so my dad thought that if I wrote the lyrics in English, then recorded them at Lucasfilm, it would be a fun way to spend time together."

Little did Williams know, the song would take on a life of its own. Once his lyrics were translated into the fictional language of Huttese, several versions of 'Lapti Nek' were recorded in the hope of turning it into an unlikely hit. These include a 12-inch club mix and a cover by Meco, the American producer whose disco versions of *Star Wars* themes sold millions worldwide. Williams even recorded a more contemporary version as Urth to capitalise on the film's success.

But when George Lucas revised the original *Star Wars* trilogy in 1997, he replaced 'Lapti Nek' with a more straightforward R&B number called 'Jedi Rocks' by Jerry Hey. The Max Rebo Band were transformed from a trio of puppets into an ensemble cast using CGI animation. Lucas felt this was closer to the "big musical number" he had originally envisioned for the film, claiming it added atmosphere. Fans disagreed. Of all the objections to the re-releases, turning that scene into an in-your-face, cartoonish interlude may be the sorest grievance.

Ever since, fans have found their own ways to keep the original song alive. There are hundreds of live performances, remixes and tributes online, including a sing-along version (where you follow a bouncing Death Star) as well as an Elvis-style cover by Darth Elvis & The Imperials. The significance of the Max Rebo Band has even been fleshed out in short stories and comics covering the expanded *Star Wars* universe.

Yet trying to piece together the story of 'Lapti Nek' is surprisingly tricky. For all the meticulous scrutiny of the *Star Wars* canon, there are still plenty of gaps, contradictions and untruths

when it comes to Jabba the Hutt's favourite disco song.

Williams has never spoken about it in interviews, mainly because nobody ever asked, but he's happy to clear things up. 'Lapti Nek' was intended as an homage to the cantina theme in the first film, where the music had a '40s feel, so the idea was to jump forward in style – and it was George Lucas who wanted a disco vibe.

People may not remember, Williams says, but that cantina theme proved an unexpected success, garnering airplay just in its original form. That's why there were all kinds of attempts to turn pieces from *Return of the Jedi* into something radio-worthy.

"Ultimately I think replacing ['Lapti Nek'] did not help the film," he says. "I know my father thought the whole idea was charming and, at the time, it worked. It was goofy but it had its place. Evidently when George re-did the visual stuff, he just considered updating the sounds to something else. And since it's his baby, he's entitled to do that."

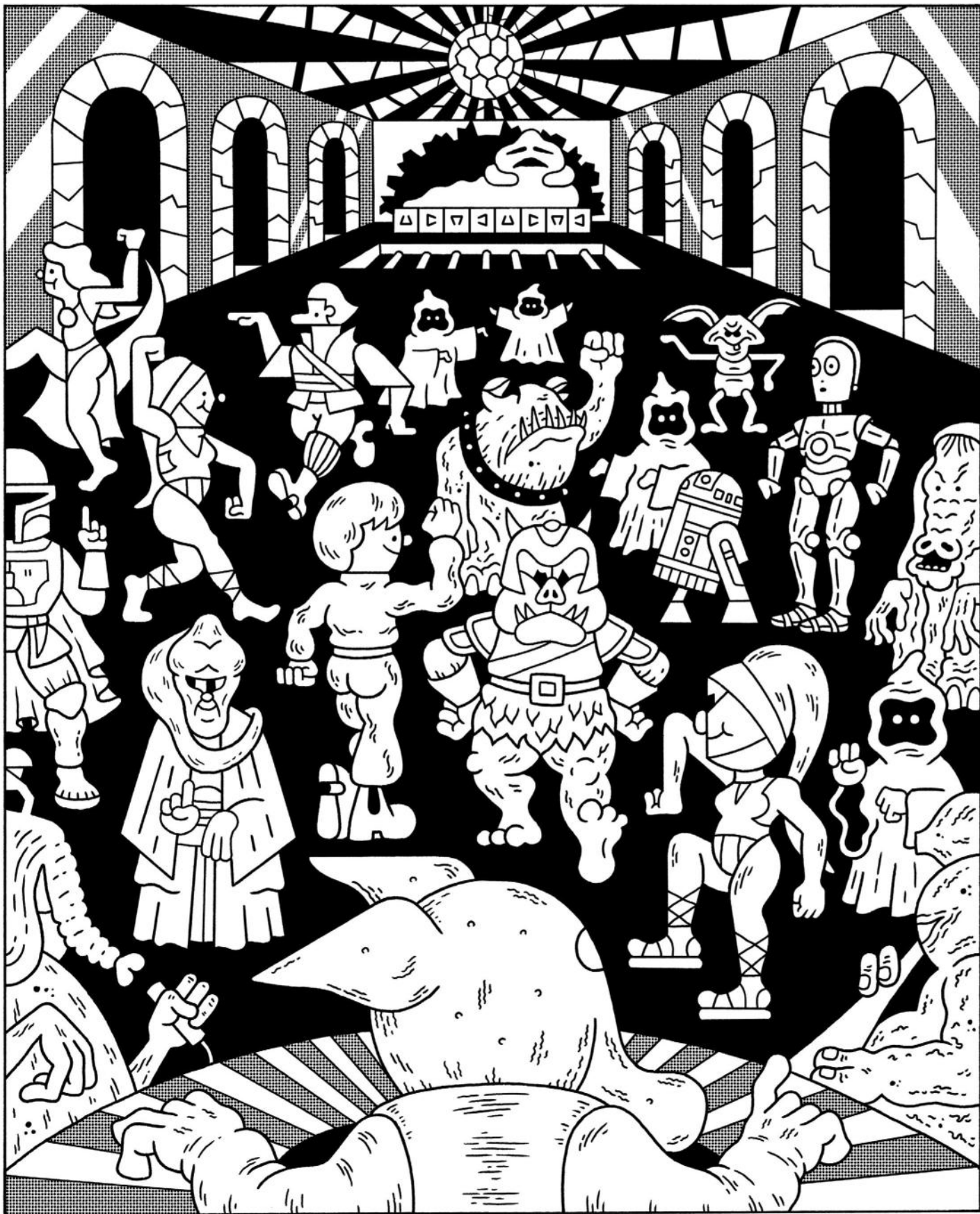
"There was always a battle against the fans who never liked the original song," says Nick Redman, a consultant for Fox Music who has worked on various *Star Wars* soundtracks. *Return of the Jedi* initially drew a backlash for appealing to younger audiences, he explains, and the 'Lapti Nek' sequence played a part in that.

When Redman began producing a *Star Wars* soundtrack anthology in 1993, there was enough antipathy surrounding the track that it was relegated to a bonus disc. By 1996, when plans were being made for the *Special Edition* soundtracks, that criticism felt amplified.

"The internet was taking off and that was probably the first time where studios were taking notice of what people were writing online – and taking them far too seriously, in my opinion." Redman can't speak for Lucas, he adds, but the filmmaker would have been aware of the song's unpopularity and perhaps saw an opportunity to change things.

Twenty years on, however, fans are still pushing for 'Lapti Nek' to be restored. Now that Disney owns the franchise, Redman can foresee the untouched films finally being released on Blu-ray. But while he agrees that a grimy disco song suits a far-off galaxy where everything feels worn out, it could just be a question of favouring what you know.

"If you first saw *Return of the Jedi* when you were seven or eight, and you loved it, then you're going to love all of it, warts and all. Whether 'Lapti Nek' is a great piece of music or not is irrelevant. It's part of the landscape. So when someone takes it away, you miss it. The debate whether George Lucas should have made any changes to the first trilogy rages on and will probably continue for the next 20 years." 🍷





In conversation with the legendary filmmaker who provided the soundtrack to our '80s youth.

WORDS BY ADAM WOODWARD • ILLUSTRATION BY DANIEL PROTHERO

Every great artist eventually reaches a point where it becomes apparent that their best work is behind them. In all likelihood John Carpenter will never again reach the heights of his '70s and '80s pomp – in the five-year period between 1978 and 1982 he directed *Halloween*, *The Fog*, *Escape from New York* and *The Thing* – but while he may not be turning out era-defining genre classics at the same astonishing rate, the 68-year-old cult icon is showing no signs of slowing down. Having not occupied the hot seat since 2010's tepidly-received psychiatric chiller *The Ward*, Carpenter has seemingly entered an exciting new phase in his career.

Building on his earlier acclaimed work as a film composer, in 2014 (on *Halloween*, no less) Carpenter released 'Vortex', the debut single from his first ever stand-alone studio album. Comprised exclusively of original non-soundtrack material, 'Lost Themes' represented both a natural extension and a significant evolution for the veteran filmmaker, returning him to the forefront of the cultural discussion surrounding

the intersection between movies and music. A follow-up album, 'Lost Themes II', arrived in 2016 along with the announcement that Carpenter would be hitting the road with his son, Cody Carpenter, and godson, Daniel Davies, to play his first live shows.

Carpenter's trademark synth is present on both 'Lost Themes' records, but unlike the distinctly minimal scores he created for all but four of his 19 feature films (the outliers being *The Thing*, *Starman*, *Memoirs of an Invisible Man* and *The Ward*) the addition of electric and acoustic guitars lends these new songs a fuller, more melodic sound. Carpenter describes 'Lost Themes' as "soundtracks for movies in your head," and indeed there's something uniquely compelling about listening to music which is unmistakably score-like in composition and tone but which exists without the need for accompanying visuals. We spoke to the horror maestro about life as a touring musician, cinema's digital revolution, and why he's open to remakes of his films.



LWLies: You've recently started touring for the first time. How has that experience been for you so far?

Carpenter: It's been fantastic. The biggest thing for me is I get to play with my son and my godson. And the other band members we have, the rhythm section, are Tenacious D's band, and they are just the greatest. So far it's been a wonderful experience. The shows have gone pretty well. It's primarily a career retrospective show, we're looking at some of the scores from my old movies. The audience seems to dig them so that's nice.

There seems to be a renewed interest in your film score work. What do you put that down to?

I can't explain it, it's just luck I think. There seems to be a nostalgia for an old synthesiser sound, which probably has something to do with it. People recognise that sound from my movies but what's funny is that I started using synthesisers out of necessity, because it was the cheapest thing available to me at the time. If I was starting all over again I would probably still use the same synthesisers, but of course the technology has advanced so much that I would be able to create completely different sounds. Digital synthesisers are the best.

What's your feeling about the move from film to digital?

There are reasons for moving to digital in film. I've seen a comparison side by side and it's really interesting. A lot of purists want to go back to using film, but there's no going back now so you've got to keep moving with the times. The only problem with digital is it doesn't hold up, you have to keep a copy on film because it just degrades. In terms of the sound, I'm working on a computer, off of audio plugins which you can purchase and play around with – man, the range you can get from them is just astonishing. I don't know if better is the right word, but it's pretty cool.

Which film composers did you most admire when you were starting out?

Movies in general were very, very important to me when I was young. They loomed very large in my life, and the music was equally as important. I was influenced by the early great composers like Bernard Herrmann and Dimitri Tiomkin. These guys were the real pioneers. As time went by I got into groups like Tangerine Dream, they did a score for a movie called *Sorcerer* which is just astonishing, that really blew me away when I first heard it. And also the work of Goblin, that was important for horror cinema. The first electronic score I ever heard was for a movie called *Forbidden Planet* back in '56. There was absolutely no orchestral music in that, it was all electronic, and I'd never heard anything like it.

Do you think orchestral scores are overused today?

Well, they sure are used a lot. They're still considered the best, you know, anyone can play a synthesiser. I have very minimal chops, which is why I say that. So there's a little bit of snobbery involved. But then you have a guy like Hans Zimmer, who blends orchestral and electronic music really well. His scores are always very memorable.

What was your process when you were starting out?

It was very improvised. When I was writing those early scores I wasn't watching the films, that only came later. So initially I would write and play the music and once I had four or five different pieces I would cut them into the movie. The first time I scored to the image was *Escape from New York* in '81. But I could sit down with a deep bass computer sound and start from there. You're trying to create a mood, so as soon as I have that initial note I can start feeling my way around. The process has evolved and I've evolved as a musician, but it's still about trying to create a mood and build an emotional connection.

Why was this the right time in your career to go into the studio for the first time and record an album?

To tell you the truth it just sort of happened. The record label heard the music and expressed their desire to release it, which was something I had wanted for quite some time. I don't know what will happen next though. I tend to take things as they come nowadays. I was pretty ill last year so every day that I'm above ground is pretty exciting.

Have you been approached in the past to write scores for other people's movies?

Yeah, but nothing I ever really wanted to do. I'd be open to something that interested me. I've always been focused on my own stuff though. I've got a couple of things cooking right now, nothing imminent, but we'll see what happens there.

Quite a few of your movies have been remade in recent years – and there's even a *Starman* update in the works. How do you feel about that?

Ah you know, it's okay. They won't destroy my originals. They're still there, people still watch them. I just prefer that when they remake my movies they pay me. That's always a bonus. But I'm never involved in the process so it really doesn't matter to me.

There's an interesting story about Ennio Morricone using some of the music he wrote for *The Thing* for Quentin Tarantino's *The Hateful Eight*...

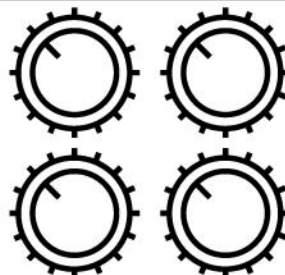
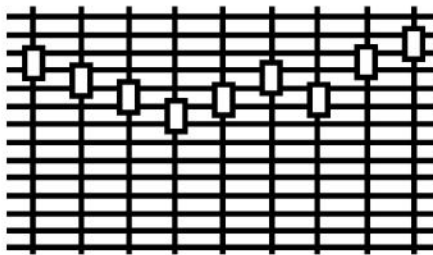
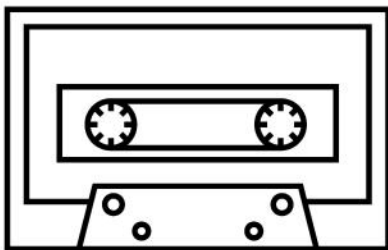
See, that's just weird. *The Thing* was the first movie I did for a major studio, and they didn't want me to do the score. So they brought in Ennio which was an amazing for me because he's one of the greatest film composers of all time. I don't speak Italian, he doesn't really speak English, but we worked pretty closely together and it worked out great. I have no problem with the fact he ended up using some of the music he wrote for *The Thing* on another movie.

What do you love about movies?

Movies are the art form of the 20th century. More so than music, I think. They're transcendent, they can be shown and enjoyed in any country in the world. Especially horror movies – people all over the world get scared about the same things, it doesn't matter who you are or where you come from. I'm scared of a lot of shit. I don't want to die. But we're all headed for the big dark, so what the hell 🍷

— 'LOST THEMES I & II' ARE BOTH AVAILABLE FROM SACRED BONES RECORDS —

John Carpenter PLAYLIST

**A**Noise Reduction EQ **HighestQuality: 7hrs****B**Noise Reduction EQ **HighestQuality: 7hrs**

A HIGH-FIDELITY RUMMAGE THROUGH THE SURPRISINGLY VARIED MUSICAL BACK CATALOGUE OF THE CULT COMPOSER- DIRECTOR.

‘Main Theme’ from *Halloween*

(1979)

Where else to start? The title track from the film that made John Carpenter a household name is generally regarded as one of *the* great pieces of horror music. And with good reason. As instantly evocative as Mike Oldfield’s ‘Tubular Bells’ or John Williams’ ominous two-note motif from *Jaws*, its ‘70s synthesiser sound perfectly captures the lurking threat of Michael Myers. See David Robert Mitchell’s *It Follows* for a recent example of how this seminal soundtrack continues to influence horror cinema.

‘The Duke Arrives’ from *Escape from New York*

(1981)

Arriving at the most important juncture in Carpenter’s career as a film composer, *Escape from New York* marked the first of many collaborations with fellow composer and sound designer Alan Howarth. It’s also the first time Carpenter scored for the screen, as opposed to scene-matching pre-recorded music. There’s a noticeable sonic shift, too, with the director’s evolving musical tastes most apparent in ‘The Duke Arrives’, an experimental, cowbell-driven track influenced by the likes of Neu! and The Police.

‘Buddy’s Death’ from *Christine*

(1983)

The soundtrack to Carpenter’s only Stephen King adaptation is another stone-cold classic – which is more than can be said for the film. ‘Buddy’s Death’ features the director’s trademark staccato high notes layered over a gently throbbing bassline, with the track’s torturous slow build creating an almost unbearable tension. Despite essentially being a ‘one-for-them’ directing gig, *Christine*’s characteristically moody score effectively establishes Carpenter’s distinct voice.

‘Back to the Street’ from *They Live*

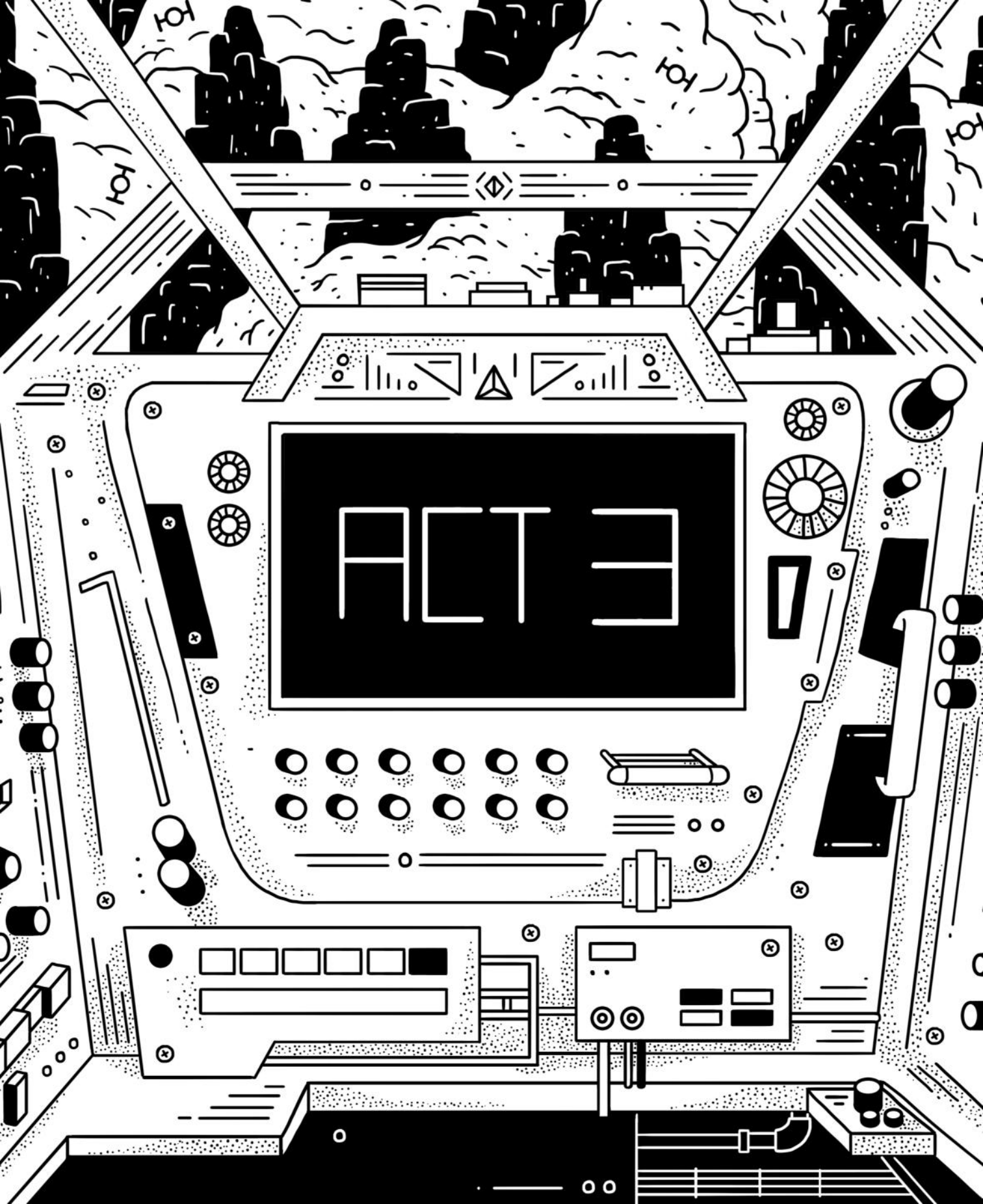
(1988)

Directed and written by Carpenter (under the pseudonym Frank Armitage), *They Live* articulates contemporary fears of a declining economy within a culture of greed and rampant consumerism. The film’s soundtrack, however, is pure ‘80s. For this soulful electro-blues cut, Carpenter and Howarth build on their minimalist sound using a range of string and woodwind instruments. The result is walking music of the highest order.

‘Virtual Survivor’ from *‘Lost Themes II’*

(2016)

A song that feels at once familiar and refreshing on first listen, ‘Virtual Survivor’ takes Carpenter’s lo-fi ambience and injects it with some serious oomph. The catchiest track on the recent album ‘Lost Themes II’ could quite easily have been lifted from *Assault on Precinct 13* or *Escape from New York*, with a muddy, groovy synth beat that conjures up images of the director’s most enduring antiheroes 🎧



ROGUE ONE

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GENE WILDER: THE LOST INTERVIEW

In 2006, the founder and editor-in-chief of *Filter* magazine got on the phone with Gene Wilder to discuss his life and work. We are proud to present their discussion in full, re-printed for the first time.

When we lose a cultural icon, we go looking for them immediately. In August of 2016 - when news broke of Gene Wilder's death - most of the world, it seems, ran to revisit *Young Frankenstein*, *Blazing Saddles*, *The Producers*, *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory*, and maybe even *Rhinoceros*. In my own case, I went looking for Wilder inside a hall closet containing a tower of old magazines. Somewhere in that cluttered mosaic of stacked periodicals and moth-nibbled scarves was his voice. Inside my head, I could already hear it.

In April of 2005, it was apparently perfectly normal to put Josh Homme of Queens of the Stone Age on the cover of a magazine and include an interview with Gene Wilder on the inside, buried somewhere around page 84, tucked in right before a chat with the band Spoon. Did it sell? Who knows - we weren't counting clicks back then. But as the editor-in-chief of the now sadly defunct music magazine *Filter*, I, along with a Spartan crew of talented and tireless writers, photographers and art directors, would stay up late and think of ridiculous ideas and no one stopped us from following them through. We would laugh out loud at what we'd done while copyediting the Table of Contents - a list of illogical choices that somehow congealed into a perfect thing. Or, so it seemed at the time.

In dealing with death, we also tend to become rosily nostalgic. I was about to write that the magazine we were making was like Gene Wilder in some way, or,

made in the same spirit as he made his films. The fact is, on 28 August - the day before Wilder's death - I wasn't thinking about the actor or my old magazine at all. I hadn't watched any of Wilder's films or thought about him much in years, even. But that fact never lessens the blow of an unexpected death and the feeling is a kind of regret. One moment you are living in the same world with Gene Wilder and now you are not. Before you know it, the memory of him shines and blossoms like the colours in *Willy Wonka*, you celebrate the work, and you rummage through your closet.

Sitting on the floor, reading my own interview with Wilder from more than a decade ago, it became clear - after wincing at some of my naïve questions - that I had to share it. No, not on social media. That stuff is awful and impermanent. There are no tweets to dig through in my closet and never, ever, any snaps or latergrams. So, here we are - the "lost" Gene Wilder interview, recovered, and carefully placed right back where it should be, in print.

My memory of him, or doing this interview, isn't much. This was a telephone conversation - he was in Connecticut and I was in California. But reading back over this interview, I clearly recall how it ended. At some point, we had been going back through each of his films (to be featured in a sidebar called "Filmography, with commentary by Gene Wilder") and he suddenly just stopped.

Wilder said politely that he had a car

waiting and he was headed to the airport. In my eager stupidity, I said, "Oh, well, I only have a few more here." (We hadn't even gotten to *Silver Streak*.) It's how he said goodbye that has stuck with me all this time. "Well, that's just fine. You can stay, but I've got to get going." And he gently hung up the phone.

LaGambina: Being famous for being funny. I'd imagine that's a unique kind of burden...

Wilder: The only burden is that people think I'm going to be funny when then say, 'Hello.' And that is a burden. I say, 'Thanks for the compliments. Thank you for saying, 'Hello.' But I'm not that funny in real life.' Sometimes I'm funny, but it's not trying to be, it just comes out. I'm funny at home, with my wife, but it's not planned. If in a restaurant someone comes up and starts talking about, 'You're the funniest guy ever.' I say, 'I'm not, really. I'm quite private, but I'm glad you've enjoyed the movies.'

What made you lean towards comedy more than anything else? Was it one of those things that just happened along the way?

No, it wasn't an accident. When I was eight years old, my mother had a severe heart attack and when she came home from the hospital, the doctor took me aside and dropped his sweaty face against my cheek and he said, 'Don't ever get angry with your mother because you might kill her.' That scared the shit out of me. And the second thing he said was, 'Try to make her laugh.' It was an unusual thing for him to say, I thought, at the time. But, from that



point on, I consciously tried to make another person laugh, and I succeeded. 'Cause, you know, when you succeed with your mother, it gives you confidence. And that's how... I think that's how it all began.

Then, I saw *Death of a Salesman* in New York when I was 16. I went to the Morosco Theatre with my sister and saw Lee J Cobb and Mildred Dunnock in *Death of a Salesman*. I was so overwhelmed by it. I thought I might want to be funny, but I didn't want to be a comedian, I wanted to be an actor. A real actor. Perhaps a real comic actor, but an actor, not a comedian. It solidified that evening. I don't want to go into anything now about the difference, but people can understand it, I think – being a comedian, standing up and trying to be funny. I just wanted to be a real actor and if it came out funny, that's fine, if it was a comedy. But I wanted to act – I do act the same way if I'm doing a comedy or a drama. It's just in a comedy, I'd make comic choices, but I try to make it as real. Actually, the more real you are in a comedy, the funnier the comedy is. So, that's what I devoted my career to.

Did it ever get to the point where you couldn't make the choices you wanted to make, because you weren't allowed to do anything outside of what you'd become known for? No, that never happened. I might not have gotten a part that I wanted, which didn't happen very often, but those were when I wanted to play in dramatic parts and someone would say, 'I don't want any comedians in this.' I'm thinking in particular of one film, from Joe Levine – he's dead now, but he was the head of Embassy Pictures. They were going to make a film and the director wanted me, the author wanted me, the production designer wanted me. He had distributed *The Producers*, where I was nominated for an Academy Award.

He said, 'You're a great actor Gene Wilder,' but when it came time for this film, he said, 'No, I don't want any comedians!' So that's the only time I remember that happening. In a comedy, they wanted me to fly and I did fly, especially when I was with Mel Brooks. He just wanted me to take off. Also, with Richard Pryor. Quite the opposite of restricting me, they were hoping always that I would shock them with something new. I'm thinking of Sidney Poitier [director of *Stir Crazy*]. And Arthur Hiller [director of *Silver Streak*]. And more times than not, I did. I wouldn't say shock, but I happily surprised them.

Were you surprised at how much chemistry you and Richard Pryor had? I was.

Where do you think it came from? Was it from the first day, or did it develop as you got to know each other? When I met him in Calgary, in Canada, for *Silver Streak*, he said, 'Hello, hello,' quietly. We said how much we admired each other. And the next day, we did our first scene – a little scene, outside, a helicopter, guns, police cars and a train – and he said something and I said my line and then he said something that was not in the script at all and I answered it with something not in the script, in a natural way. We did that for a few lines and then came back, ended up on the script lines, and that was how we started our improvisational relationship. And at the end of the scene, when we had made a shambles out of everyone – all the prison guards and everything else – we both, at the same moment, started humming the Laurel and Hardy theme song. [Humming the famous melody] dum, da dum da dum de dum... And when he hollered 'Cut!' and everyone was laughing, I said, 'Did you know you were going to do that?' And Richard said,

'No. Did you?' And I said, 'No.' But we both did it, I suppose, because it appealed to the same silliness. That's the way it always was when we worked. We never talked about anything to do with improvising, it just happened. I didn't do that with other people. In a sense it was like a sexual attraction. That is, the chemistry. You say, 'Why that woman and not this woman? That woman is much prettier, a better figure, a better body, softer skin, whatever. But I'm attracted to that woman.' You say, 'It's a mystery.' Why? Chemistry. It's just the chemistry. In that sense, that's what Richard Pryor and I had. I also had that with Madeline Kahn, whom I adored.

I never seem to associate you with Los Angeles or New York, really. And you essentially came out of the Midwest... Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

From there, which way did you initially lean – New York and the stage, or Los Angeles and the movies? Only New York. When I was asked by Gene Saks, who was directing me in something, he said, 'Why don't you go to California and get into films? You're talented.' I said, 'Yeah, yeah.' But I would go there and some producer would say, 'I hear you're a funny guy.' And then they'd expect me to be funny and I wouldn't be. Give me the part and I would be, but not just to walk into an office and try and sell myself. I wouldn't be any good at it. I said, 'The only way I'll get into the movies is if someone sees me in a play.' Arthur Penn and Warren Beatty saw me in a play – I don't even remember which one – and asked me to do *Bonnie and Clyde*.

People don't believe me when I tell them you're in that movie. I'm there. It's a very good, small part. That was my first one.



Was that a good experience for a first film?

Oh, I loved it. The most memorable experience was when I was filming interiors, in Hollywood at Warner Brothers, and Arthur Penn said, 'Action,' and I started right in. He said, 'Wait, wait, Gene. Just because I say "action" doesn't mean you have to start acting. It just means: we're all ready. I see something's cooking in you and it's not quite ready to come out. Film is cheap, take your time and when you're ready, you start acting.' I did, and it came out very well and all that. Then, when that scene was over, the first assistant director came up to me and said, 'Don't get used to that. You won't find many people who work the way Arthur Penn does.'

You've been doing some stage work on the East Coast in recent years. Is there still any eagerness to make films? I'd rather be in a film, but the kinds of films that I want to do aren't being written anymore.

I think that too, but I'm not sure if I'm just being nostalgic... No, you're not. I'm nostalgic too! And terribly disappointed. Once in a while a director or some writer or producer will send me a script and I'll say, 'The script is good, but I'm not right for this part.' Or, 'I can see why you want me for this part, but the script is junk.' The kinds of movies that I made with Mel Brooks, people don't make those movies anymore.

Why not? I don't know if anyone would produce *The Producers* today. I don't think they would do *Young Frankenstein*. They might do *Blazing Saddles*. They might. But I wouldn't bet on it. They want what's often referred to as 'edgy'. They're thinking about how much money it will make. No one has shot a foot of film, or even finished the casting, but it's based on, 'How much do you think this will do?' That's

just death. It's got nothing to do with art. I'm not saying that you have to be unaware of the commercial potentiality of something. I want a film to be popular. If I do a comedy I certainly want it to be popular. If it's really funny, it should be popular. But there's no guarantee of that sort of thing.

They're doing another film version of *The Producers*... They start next week. But that's a musical. That's not *The Producers* as you know it from the film. It's the same story, of course, and characters, but different – some of the characters are even different. It's a wonderful musical. Mel wrote great songs for it. Nathan Lane and Matthew Broderick are wonderful in it and it'll be very good. I'm sure it will be. But that's not remaking *The Producers*, that's making it into a musical.

What are your feelings about the upcoming version of *Willy Wonka*? I'm not even sure what I think about it, I associate you with the role so strongly... Well, I'm glad that you do. I don't think there's going to be any relation to the one that I did. First of all, they're not calling it *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory*, it's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, which was the original title of the book. And Tim Burton did *Edward Scissorhands* and *Beetlejuice* and *Batman*. He's not going to do anything close to what we did. I'm sure it's going to be very scary and my bet, my guess is, it will be geared towards teenagers rather than for pre-teens. I think he wants to scare the shit out of everyone. And he probably will. All kinds of special effects, visual effects, scary things – I'm guessing that. I haven't seen it, so I don't know.

Do you have any interest in seeing it? No. If they had made a remake of *The Wizard of*

Oz first, I might have been interested. But for some reason they passed that by and went right on to *Willy Wonka*.

As far as performers go, it's near impossible to think of anyone doing comedic acting nowadays who is doing it quite the way you were able to in some of your films. People sometimes mention Will Ferrell... Really? What has he been in?

I guess he's most famous for *Old School*, or maybe *Anchorman*. He was also on *Saturday Night Live* for a number of years... Oh, I don't think I know his work...

I'm not sure what you'd think of him. I'm not sure if comedic actors are even the same thing anymore... I don't know if people doing comedy today want to devote themselves to doing a real person – a live, human being who also happens to be funny, but is acting in a way that is realistic. It could be in a farce, it could be in a wild comedy it could be in a gentle comedy, it could be whatever – I'm just saying, good acting is good acting. But if you're going directly for the joke bull's eye, then you distort your own talent. I don't know who works that way now.

You recently finished writing your memoirs. Did you learn anything about yourself? I'm more sure now of all I thought was true. I've found – after a long time – real love. That is, love that will last as long as I'm alive, with a mate that I wouldn't have been ready for 20 years ago and now we've been married for 13-and-a-half years.

I think that's what everyone wants, or hopes for. I think so. But it's been a long process to get there ☺

A SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY:

WITH COMMENTARY BY GENE WILDER

THE PRODUCERS_(1968)

"If Mel Brooks hadn't cast me in *The Producers*, I would probably be making wallets in a neuropsychiatric ward. I loved Zero Mostel. And I love Mel. And I'll always love that film, as a memory for how it brought me to Mel and how it changed my life."

WILLY WONKA_(1971)

"I'm very fond of it. When I asked to do it and the director Mel Smart came to my house, he said, 'Do you like it?' I said, 'I think it's very good, but I'd like to come out with a cane, so everyone's saying, 'Oh my God, Willy Wonka is crippled.' The crowd hushes down and I hobble over towards the front gate and then my cane gets stuck into a brick and I fall forward, do somersault, jump up, everyone cheers and laughs.' He said, 'What do you want to do that for?' I said, 'Because from that time on, no one will know whether I'm lying or telling the truth.' He said, 'You mean, if I say "No" you won't do the film?' And I said, 'That's right.' He said, 'Oh. Okay, okay. Let's do it then. I was very sincere about that, because just to come out and do all those things with the children – I wanted that mystery: 'Is he sincere now or is he just being sarcastic, is he telling the truth or is he lying?' That's what, what I wanted. I have very pleasant memories of it. Jack Albertson (Grandpa Joe) and Peter Ostrom (Charlie Bucket) – all the gang. They were very good."

EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT SEX BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK_(1972)

"I loved doing it, but the part wasn't that long. I saw Woody Allen every day. He never said anything to me. Well, he said about three things: 'Did they give you coffee or tea this morning?' I said, 'yes, thanks.' At noon he said, 'Do you know where to get your lunch?' I said, 'Yeah, they told me.' And then, at about four o'clock, he said, 'Did anyone give you coffee, tea?' I said, 'Yes, thanks.' The only other thing he said to me, apart from 'good morning' and 'good night', was, 'By the way, if you don't like any of these lines, change them and say what you want.' I thought, 'My God. That's a courageous thing to say.' However, I realised later that his brilliance was that he was more interested in the event, not in the lines. If you could make that

event come to life more with your own words, that was fine with him. Falling in love with a sheep was the important thing, not what lines you're saying while you fall in love with the sheep. It made a big impression on me."

RHINOCEROS_(1974)

"Well, that wasn't really a film. It was a great disappointment for me, except working with Zero Mostel again – that was wonderful. It was filmed theatre. They wanted to make a film out of it, but they got a director (Tom O'Horgan) who had done *Hair* on Broadway and he didn't really know anything about film. He was a very nice man, a sweet man, but Karen Black and I would be fumbling and stumbling over this one very difficult scene. After a half-an-hour I said, 'Tom, aren't you going to say something, direct us in some way? How loud or soft or fast or slow? Anything?' He said, 'No. I believe that in all this chaos and confusion, something wonderful might come. That's what I'm looking for.' Well, you can do that if maybe you have about six months to rehearse, but in a film it was just anathema."

BLAZING SADDLES_(1974)

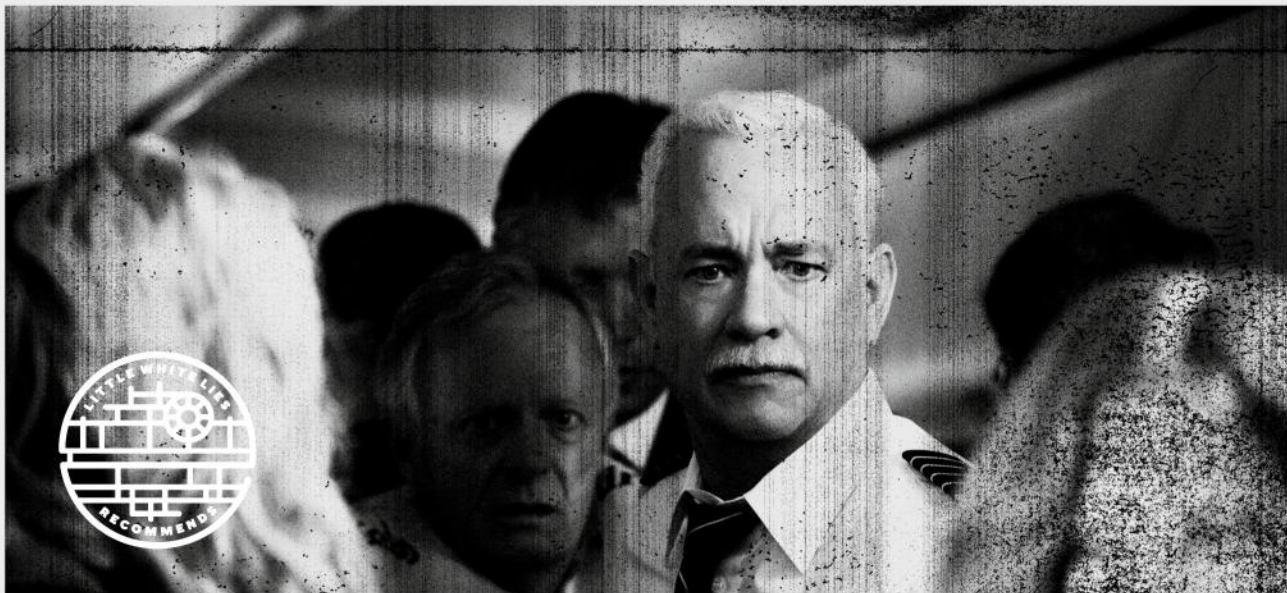
"Well, I loved it but *Young Frankenstein* was my favourite..."

YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN_(1974)

"Happiest film I ever made. It's the only one I can watch and enjoy. Not all the way through, because I don't like watching myself that much – but I still laugh at that one. I was so happy during it. All those people – what a cast! Mel Brooks at his brilliant best."

STIR CRAZY_(1980)

"When we did *Stir Crazy*, [the director] Sidney Poitier said, 'I want you fellas to fly, that's why you're here. I've got three cameras. Just take off. Go anywhere within reason.' And that's what we did. I had improvised plenty at the Actor's Studio, but certainly not on stage, and not on film... except when I worked with Richard Pryor."



SULLY

Directed by_
CLINT EASTWOOD
 Starring_
TOM HANKS
AARON ECKHART
LAURA LINNEY
 Released_
2 DECEMBER

4

ANTICIPATION_

Eastwood is on a major roll at the moment.

5

ENJOYMENT_

Minimal tabloid sensationalism, maxium human insight.

5

IN RETROSPECT_

One of 2016's very best.

Clint Eastwood's *Sully* exemplifies the director's attraction to stories that reconfigure American icons. Be it the unreliable narrators of *J Edgar* or *Jersey Boys* that turned history inwards, or the heroes for sale in *Flags of Our Fathers* and *American Sniper* whose actions opened fresh wounds in the nation's war-torn psyche. The subject in question is Captain Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger (Tom Hanks) a name forever associated with an event coined as the 'Miracle on the Hudson' that took place on 15 January 2009, when a geese strike caused the pilot's plane engines to fail, forcing an immediate emergency landing on the Hudson River in New York City.

Rather than a *United 93*-esque docudrama about the landing, we open on its aftermath, with Sully and co-pilot Jeff Skiles (Aaron Eckhart) holed into the New York City Marriott hotel and wheeled out for a number of talk show appearances. Sullenberger is caught in self doubt over his public image, even if his temperament is that of the measured, controlled man who performed the heroic act. PTSD looms over him. Sully's calls back home to his wife, Lorraine (Laura Linney), serve as reminders that there are still unpaid bills that no hero label can cover. The film goes about depicting what is forgotten about his lionisation: that there were doubts cast over his actions. The ensuing bureaucratic process and trial that took place wasn't in public, but behind closed doors.

Considering Eastwood's outspoken political views, it's easy to imagine a less subtle version of this film drawing parallels between Obama worship (the film takes place around the time of his inauguration)

and Sully's media blitz. Considering the two terms of his presidency sit neatly between the week of the 'Miracle' and the film's release, it's hard not to see the film in its compact form as a corrective to the bloated tentpole Hollywood product that's sadly defined Obama-era American cinema.

The spacing out of the 'movie for adults', or narratives about the real world are forcing the comic book genre to take up the mantle in depicting national tragedy in mainstream cinema. In particular, the crass, ideologically incoherent appropriation of 9/11 imagery, Sullenberger's various worst-case scenario nightmares of the plane crashing in New York City inevitably evoke that day, though not as a way to laud him for the sake of post-9/11 revisionism.

The comparison extends to Eastwood and regular director of photography Tom Stern's decision to shoot the film almost entirely with an IMAX camera, yet setting themselves apart by not designating between money shot and exposition. It's appropriate considering the spectacular landing is just a means rather than end of the narrative. It builds to the reveal that the miracle itself was a team effort, cutting from the monitoring control room, the rescuing ferry squad and the cockpit. The human factor that Sullenberger uses in defence of his split-second decision making is a statement of basic decency against bureaucratic breakdown. Though there is a temptation to read the pragmatic resolution as its own form of stealth hero worship. Yet this middle ground feels like a necessity today – a level-headed statement when both Hollywood and politics seek to create confused binaries. **ETHAN VESTBY**



I, OLGA_HEPNAROVÁ

Directed by_
PETR KAZDA
TOMÁS WEINREB
 Starring_
MICHALINA OLSZANSKA
MARTIN PECHLÁT
KLÁRA MELÍSKOVÁ
 Released_
18 NOVEMBER

3

ANTICIPATION_
*Sensationalist
 cinematic clickbait?*

3

ENJOYMENT_
*Monster mashed
 with a bleak
 socialist-era
 aesthetic.*

3

IN RETROSPECT_
*A timely cautionary
 tale about the cycle
 of abuse.*

Prague, 1973. A young woman drives her truck down a bustling footpath, taking out a crowd of around 25 people. She, Olga Hepnarová, is convicted of mass murder and hanged less than two years later, thus earning the ignominious title of 'last woman put to death in Czechoslovakia'. Forty years on, she is memorialised in *I, Olga Hepnarová*, the first feature from Czech directing duo Petr Kazda and Tomáš Weinreb. With its plodding plot and penchant for moderation, this crime-drama-biopic lands with a final thud of realisation: I just spent 100 minutes semi-sympathising with a psychopath.

Socially receding Olga (Michalina Olszanska) asserts that she's been bullied her whole life, by her family, schoolmates, and the crippled system of 'psychiatric care' (almost an oxymoron in Soviet Czechoslovakia) instated to restore her mental health. Leaving home in her late teens, Olga opts for self-imposed exile at her family's rural farmhouse – a totem to her loneliness and apparent disregard for personal hygiene. Embodied with lupine likeness by Olszanska, Olga swings from detached loner to postal Prügelknabe ('victim of bullying,' she explains) faster than you can say 'lady Unabomber'.

Captured in clinical black and white, the film surveys the social shades of grey that paved the way for this middling girl to commit premeditated mass murder. Aesthetically, it's devoid of colour and warmth, much like Olga's experience of childhood. Holed up in a hospital ward as a teen, she incredulously observes her fellow female inmates smoking and making out, before they turn on her,

beating her up in an off-kilter scene that's one part *Annie* to three parts *Carrie*.

Notably, this is the only instance of violence against Olga depicted in the film, despite her claims of suffering lifelong physical cruelty. In illustrating the cycle of abuse and its fatal repercussions, Weinreb and Kazda shelve tabloid sensationalism in favour of stylistic restraint. The spare production design occasionally edges towards student film realness, but minutiae like Olga's socks-and-sandals ensemble help paint this greyscale picture of Communist-era repression. Bereft of a musical score, the empty soundscape speaks volumes about life under socialist rule. Any link between Olga's unstable sexual identity and her precarious mental health largely goes unexploited. After getting unceremoniously dumped by nubile girlfriend Jitka (Marika Soposká), Olga reveals to a psychiatrist that she longs for the closeness of a female life partner, though she later shacks up with father figure Miroslav (Martin Pechlát). No directorial judgement is passed on the awkward young woman whose worst enemy is arguably her own martyr complex, escalating incrementally across the film, exacerbated by break-ups, job loss and an arctic family environment.

Reading from Graham Greene's 'The Quiet American', Olga asks, "wouldn't we do better if we didn't try to understand each other?" In 2016 – a time of relentless terror attacks, gun violence and political conflict – that's a loaded question. But in their metered portrayal of a teen misfit-cum-murderer, it's clear Weinreb and Kazda disagree with their protagonist.

AIMEE KNIGHT



LO_AND_BEHOLD

Directed by_
WERNER HERZOG
 Starring_
ELON MUSK
LAWRENCE KRAUSS
LUCIANNE WALKOWICZ
 Released_
28 OCTOBER

4

ANTICIPATION_

Please nail the internet for us, Werner.

3

ENJOYMENT_

A phantasmagoric super-highway of information.

3

IN RETROSPECT_

More interpretation and less information would have led to a more lingering legacy.

If the internet were to be formally recreated as a film, it might resemble Werner Herzog's 10-chaptered spidery infoverse of a movie. Whether information presented artlessly on its own terms makes for a commendable viewing experience is all a matter of taste. Nothing narrated in the endearing deadpan of Werner Herzog could ever be dry. His curiosities regarding the riddles of the connected world are articulated with piercing intelligence and an impish relish for the absurd. Listening to his interpretation of our time's greatest unknown known intoxicates and breeds an appetite for a more personal perspective that never fully comes into being.

For Herzog's comments – expressed in narration and questions – are just the joining stitches. The bulk of the material is interviews regarding all frontiers of the internet. Herzog plays intellectual explorer, notching up points of view like a kid in a cerebral candy store. The subjects are fascinating, yet their words sometimes come with an artificial sense of wonder. The structure of *Lo and Behold...* begins and ends with the decision to create 10 chapters. There is limited support to uphold the teeming mass of individual intelligences.

The result is a litany of stand-alone pleasures and stimulants. Herzog's focus begins with the birth of the internet at UCLA in 1969, when everyone online was listed in a slender directory. It ends by speculating as to what the future holds, and how society would cope if everything just shut down. He explores

the dark side of the net, interviewing those in rehab for internet addiction, as well as a family scarred by the inhumanity of anonymous trolls. There is a visit to Green Bank, a disconnected safe haven (evocative of Todd Haynes' 1995 film *Safe*) for people whose bodies are made sick by the cellular signals and radio waves. Herzog's superpower is his ability to extract far-reaching soundbites from subjects, emerging with the heart of stories sufficiently complex and strange to fill their own feature films.

Normal people made extraordinary by their experiences are mixed in with specialists. Space-magnate Elon Musk, counter-cyber-espionage operative Shawn Carpenter, and one of the world's most infamous hackers, Kevin Mitnick, are among the countless individuals contributing to this thick gumbo of anecdotes, opinions and information. The density of the content suggests the benefit of repeat visits. And yet...

Even after two viewings, it's too much. The first time, the focus remained on reverently trying to Hoover up each burst of information, taking Werner's humorous tidbits as a source of uproarious glee. By the second viewing, it feels like this film has sacrificed depth for breath, and arcs for parts. What initially seems like an overflowing cup to be returned to and drunk from repeatedly, feels more like widely spaced-out thimbles of water – refreshing initially but not substantial enough to quench thirst for a satisfying narrative about the connected world.

SOPHIE MONKS KAUFMAN



NOCTURNAL ANIMALS

Directed by_ **TOM FORD**
 Starring_ **AMY ADAMS**
JAKE GYLLENHAAL
MICHAEL SHANNON
 Released_ **4 NOVEMBER**

ANTICIPATION_

Tom Ford's debut was beautiful; this long-awaited follow-up looks bigger, darker and stranger.

4

ENJOYMENT_

Gripping for its eccentricity, but too messy and frustrating.

3

IN RETROSPECT_

As gratuitously cruel as A Single Man was tender.

2

Tom Ford's long awaited follow-up to his directorial debut, *A Single Man*, confirms his dedication to style – unsurprising for a day-jobbing fashion designer. Yet it adopts a more playful approach. A two-part structure sees the director adopts two wildly different styles in order to reflect these bisecting narratives. A fluid camera follows Susan (Amy Adams) as she drifts through her LA art gallery or her modern house, melancholy and lonely despite her affluence and friends. When she immerses herself in the manuscript sent out of the blue by her ex-husband, Edward, however, Ford's images flatten like pages from a book. The characters within the novel – and the desert they find themselves lost in – appear on the same saturated plane. Tony (Jake Gyllenhaal) and his wife and daughter, together with the other characters imagined by Edward, seem imprisoned by this arid environment, a framing device that translates the novel's inherent trashiness.

In the fictional but somewhat autobiographical book, 'Nocturnal Animals', Edward depicts a chilling story of manipulation, trauma and revenge. Tony's family is randomly attacked by young drifters led by Ray, who, as played by Aaron Taylor-Johnson, appears as an unbearable joker trying too hard to be tough. Thankfully, his performance is as atrocious as Michael Shannon's is delightful, the latter playing Officer Bobby Andes. To fit in to this environment, Shannon understands that he has to be as crude and stereotypical as possible. Overblown as the blasé cowboy, not simply nihilistic but actually suicidal, Andes is the most believable character in

this world of absurd violence, coming across as the written words that you can feel when passing your hand across the page.

This harrowing story repeatedly forces Susan to put down the book. By linking her luxurious but depressing lifestyle to Tony's campy descent into hell, Ford attempts to connect their emotions. Susan, however, doesn't experience violence like Tony does. She feels his pain because she too has regrets. In the tawdriest fashion, Edward displays through Tony his anxious passion and his anger towards Susan. She is supposed to realise that the horror of that story is no less intense than the one he himself endured when she left him.

As Susan remembers their married years through flashbacks, the survival-mode of the novel sits in stark contrast to the romantic portrayal of a love affair blossoming into a complicated marriage. This section is the simplest stylistically yet the richest emotionally. Adams and Gyllenhaal both perfectly capture the optimism tainted by self doubt that characterises early adulthood. In fact, Ford is so fair to both young characters that Edward's bitterness later in life comes across as childish. The novel's trashiness has contaminated real life, which, after these emotionally hyper-realistic flashbacks, feels like a heartless twist. By the film's close, Ford had made such an annoying mess of his characters' intentions that it's hard to care for a final silly attempt at shock revenge. Yet that last scene is representative of the entire film: dramatic yet grotesque, moving yet confusing, delicate until brutally unsubtle, and, finally, disappointing. **MANUELA LAZIC**

ADAM DRIVER

GOLSHIFTEH FARAHANI



"ADAM DRIVER DELIVERS ONE
OF THE YEAR'S GREATEST
PERFORMANCES"



JACOB STOLWORTHY, THE INDEPENDENT

"A TREASURE FOR YEARS TO COME"



TIM ROBEY, THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

"JIM JARMUSCH'S
NEW FILM IS A DELIGHT"



THE GUARDIAN

"A PLEASURE TO
GET LOST IN"

JAMIE GRAHAM, TOTAL FILM



LITTLE WHITE LIES



CINEVUE



THE UPCOMING



TIME OUT



COLLIDER



SLANT MAGAZINE



HEYUGUYS



THE LIST

A film by Jim Jarmusch

PATERSON

K5 INTERNATIONAL and AMAZON STUDIOS PRESENT IN ASSOCIATION WITH LE PACTE and INKJET PRODUCTION A FILM BY JIM JARMUSCH ADAM DRIVER GOLSHIFTEH FARAHANI "PATERSON"
DANNY SHABAKA HENLEY CLIFF SMITH CHASTEN HARRISON WILLIAM JACKSON HARPER and MASATOSHI MARASE CASTING BY ELLEN LEVINS & NESHAN RAFFERTY PRODUCTION DESIGNER RON PADGETT MUSIC BY SIOUL
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS CATHERINE GEORGE EDITOR AFFONSO GONCALVES A.C.E. PRODUCTION DESIGNER MARK FRIEDBERG DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY FREDERICK ELMES A.S.C. EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS OLIVER SHAW DANIEL BAIR RON DOZMAN JEAN LABADIE
PRODUCED BY JOSHUA ASTRACHAN CARTER LOGAN WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY JIM JARMUSCH



PRODUCED BY JOSHUA ASTRACHAN CARTER LOGAN WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY JIM JARMUSCH



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IN CINEMAS NOVEMBER 25



KEEPS YOU WARM KEEPS YOU DRY

— ALL
WEATHER
MTE —

THE SK8-HI MTE



VANS

"OFF THE WALL"

_ CHARLIE _ BROOKER _



Crossing the Atlantic to interview British writer and broadcaster Charlie Brooker may seem a bit perverse, but it's oddly fitting, echoing the move of his genre-blending sci-fi series *Black Mirror* from Channel 4 to streaming behemoth Netflix. Here, Brooker discusses the opportunities of working on an international canvas, the benefits of writing standing up (and with a PlayStation in the house), and how he loves stories with horrible, bleak endings.

LWLies: What does having a bigger canvas give you, creatively? Brooker: The main thing is, there's more variety of tone. So it's not always a bleak-fest, because that would get very predictable. We've already done seven episodes with a really horrible ending. And we kind of approached it like we were doing different genre movies. So *San Junipero* is like a coming-of-age drama, a romance, a John Hughes movie, and then you've got *Nosedive*, which is more of a social satire, and then you've got *Playtest*, which is like a horror, like *Evil Dead 2*. It's a really idiosyncratic and odd show, because they're all so different from each other, but they're all under the same banner. In our wanky way, we thought, 'it's like we're curating a film festival'.

Has your writing process changed? There was somebody from *Creative Screenwriting Magazine* who was here earlier, and she said, 'have you got any advice for writers?' and I said, 'yeah, write standing up'. Because this time around, I bought a cheap little stand off Amazon, and I wrote standing

up, because it's slightly uncomfortable – it's not so uncomfortable that you can't do it, it's slightly uncomfortable. And it means you don't end up going on the internet, basically, because you're there to do a fucking job.

So I'll write for 25 minutes... then I'll go and play on the PlayStation for a bit. And I do this all night. I go nocturnal. And then I go back and I'll write a bit more, and then I go back to the PlayStation, and then I go back... And hopefully by then, I'll lose track of time and then I'll be writing for fucking ages, and then there's a point where you get excited about it. So my advice for writers is: always write standing up, and get Scrivener. And write in 25 minute bursts. And get a PlayStation.

Does writing come easily to you? No, it's always been like fucking pulling teeth. I love having written, but I hate writing. When I was writing weekly columns for the paper, I found that increasingly more and more difficult, for some reason. And then I stopped doing it. And then, not that long ago, *The New Yorker* asked me to write a piece, and I was like 'Oh, it's the New Yorker – well, I've got to do that!' And it was a nightmare, because I hadn't written an article, or a column, in like a year. I'd forgotten how to do it. It was so difficult.

Do you miss exercising that particular writing muscle? I don't miss that, no. Because by the end, I was really not enjoying it. I think it was partly because I just felt like I'd exhausted my desire to write like that.

And I'm sure it'll come back, and I'll want to write things like that, or write longform prose pieces. But at the moment I don't. It's like, when I started out I was a cartoonist for ages, but then I got sick of doing the speech bubbles. I've blown up that whole side of my career, it's slightly terrifying.

Black Mirror feels like something of an anomaly on Netflix, the home of binge-watching. Was that a creative concern? I think that it's the perfect platform for anthology shows, by which I mean a different story each time – because, traditionally, when you're doing a show when the stories are going to be different each episode, you don't have cliffhangers or returning characters. Somebody used a good analogy the other day where they were saying it's like it's in a cupboard in your house and you don't know it's there. It's like when *Stranger Things* took off, and became a thing, and suddenly everybody had to watch *Stranger Things*. And people would go 'have you seen *Stranger Things* yet? No? Oh, it's in that cupboard in your house, go and have a look.

Was there anything you do in this new Netflix series that you couldn't do on Channel 4? Just the running time, really. Nothing in terms of content. I've been very lucky, I think, throughout my broadcast career. Freakishly lucky. Once you've fucked a pig on the telly, the bar for what's acceptable has been shifted 🐷

The new series of *Black Mirror* is available now on Netflix.

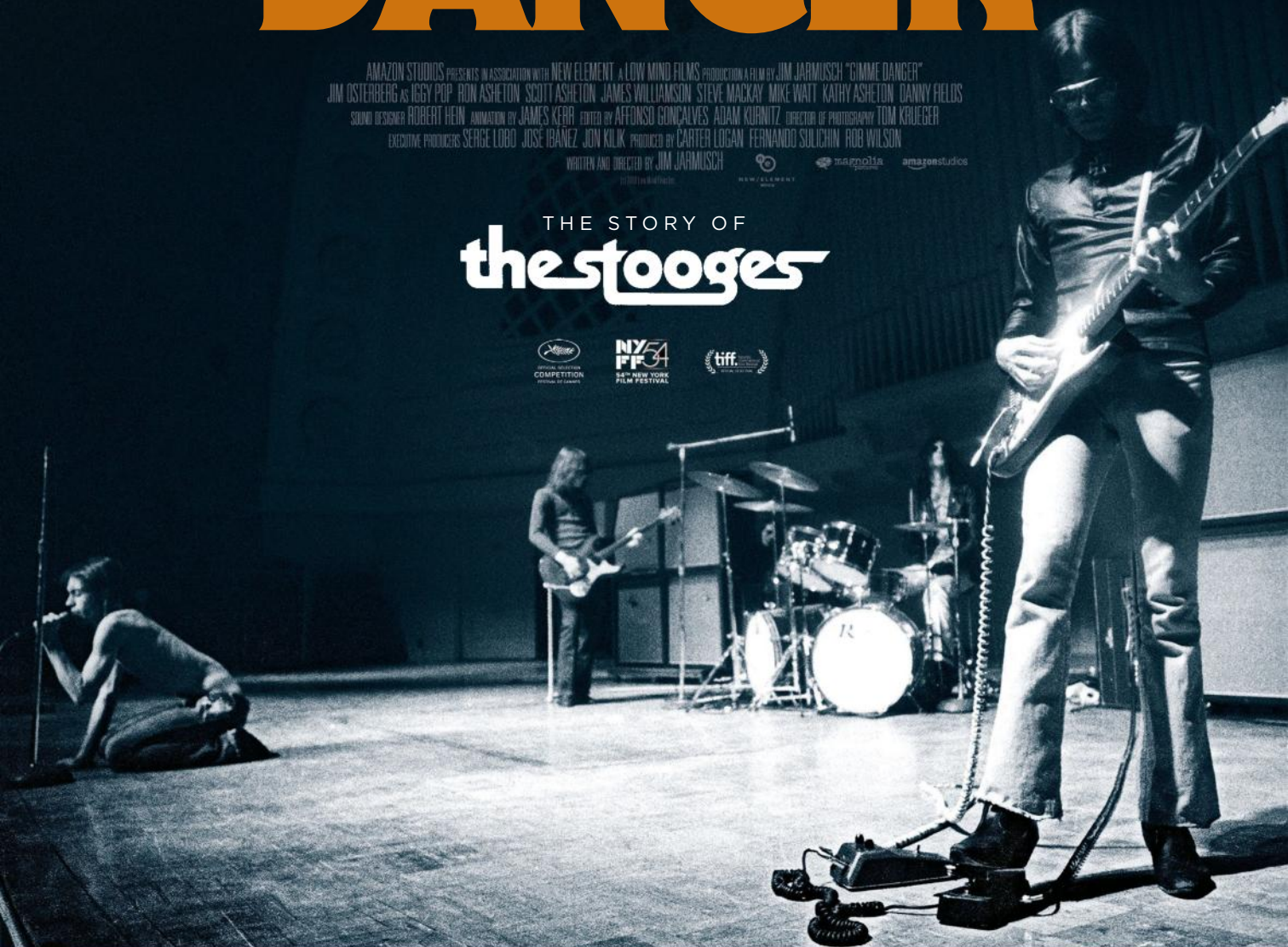
dogwoof PRESENTS

A FILM BY
JIM JARMUSCH

GIMME DANGER

AMAZON STUDIOS PRESENTS IN ASSOCIATION WITH NEW ELEMENT, A LOW MIND FILMS PRODUCTION A FILM BY JIM JARMUSCH "GIMME DANGER"
JIM OSTERBERG AS IGGY POP RON ASHETON SCOTT ASHETON JAMES WILLIAMSON STEVE MACKAY MIKE WATT KATHY ASHETON DANNY FIELDS
SOUND DESIGNER ROBERT HEIN ANIMATION BY JAMES KERR EDITED BY AFFONSO GONCALVES ADAM KURNITZ DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY TOM KRUEGER
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS SERGE LOBO JOSÉ IBÁÑEZ JON KILIK PRODUCED BY CARTER LOGAN FERNANDO SULICHIN ROD WILSON
WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY JIM JARMUSCH

THE STORY OF
the stooges



GimmeDanger.co.uk

IN CINEMAS 18 NOVEMBER



CREEPY

Directed by_
KIYOSHI KUROSAWA
 Starring_
HIDETOSHI NISHIJIMA
TERUYUKI KAGAWA
YŪKO TAKEUCHI
 Released_
25 NOVEMBER

ANTICIPATION_

After the monotonous Journey to the Shore, expectations were tempered.

ENJOYMENT_

Kurosawa returns to his sinister roots with a brutal serial killer yarn.

IN RETROSPECT_

The stuff nightmares are made of.

We've all had that bad feeling before. Interact with enough people in this world and someone ends up giving you the willies. Without pinpointing exactly why, your gut screams, 'Run the other way!' But do you? Kiyoshi Kurosawa's new serial killer yarn, *Creepy*, embodies this conundrum from the start. The title is meant to be a blatantly inadequate descriptor for the unclassifiable actions of a person acting outside society's normal social graces. How we interpret (and underestimate) these uneasy feelings conjures up questions about our worldview.

In the film's crackerjack opening sequence, Detective Takura (Hidetoshi Nishijima) interrogates a captured murderer who discusses his "own version of morality." Moments later the smiling suspect slashes two additional throats with a fork during an escape attempt before being gunned down by police. Left rattled by the experience, Takura quits the force, begins a new job as a professor of criminal psychology, and moves to a new house with his wife, Yasuko (Yūko Takeuchi).

Almost immediately the couple's fresh start hits a few road bumps. Their reclusive next-door neighbour Nishino (Teruyuki Kagawa) is the epitome of a walking contradiction, one moment kind and effusive and the next an aggressive bully. While sitting idly in the library after class, Takura discovers an old cold case file about the inexplicable disappearance of three family members who fell off the map years previous leaving only a young daughter behind. With the help of a former colleague, he begins to investigate on the sly. Old habits die hard.

During an uncomfortable interview with one eye witness, Takura confesses, "I always confuse work with personal interests." Kurosawa illuminates his character's tragic flaw when the situation with Nishino grows increasingly uncomfortable. We see telltale signs of the "mixed characteristic" serial killer archetype mentioned during a lecture, yet everyday distractions seem to dilute Takura's concern.

Creepy has a cold preciseness that stands in contrast to the director's previous feature *Journey to the Shore*, a messy melodrama that jumps illogically between different points in a fuzzy dream state. No such levity can be found here. Menacing camera movements help track characters through rooms, sometimes anticipating their location before they even arrive. Kurosawa's experimental lighting also adds another psychological dimension, as is the case with a brilliant interrogation scene that echoes one found late in Louis Malle's *Elevator to the Gallows*.

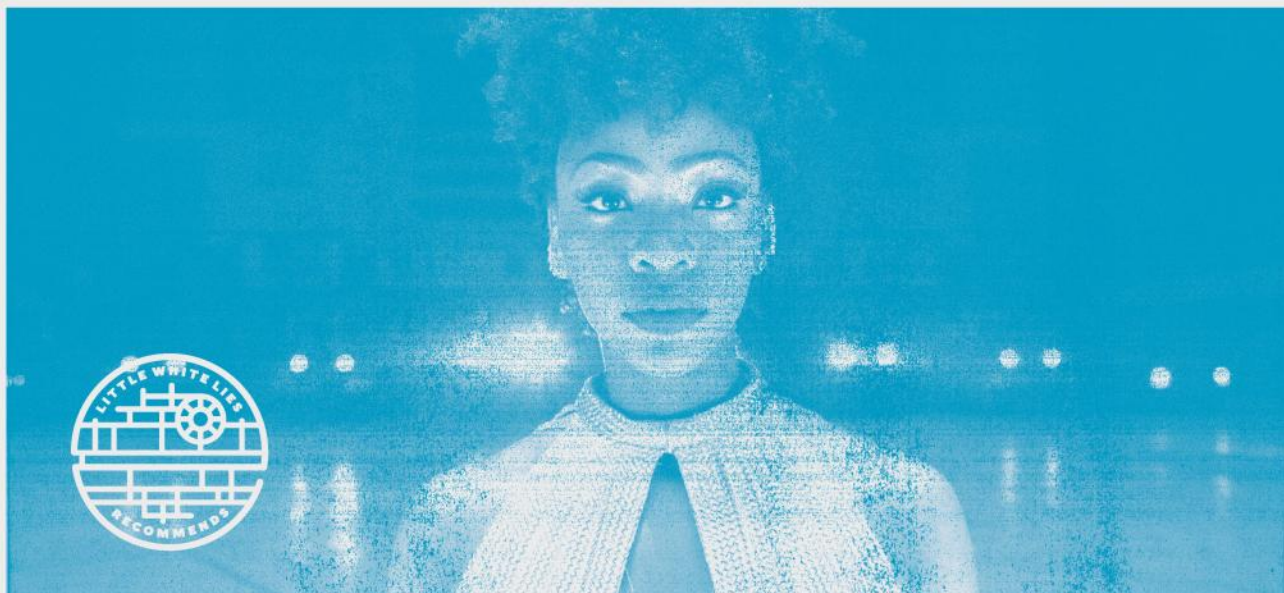
In terms of framing, Kurosawa stays in pristine wide angle until a humdinger of a close-up. His aesthetic, like the charismatic villain, experiments with different forms of verbal and visual manipulation. This is capped off by an insanely impressionistic use of rear-projection in the final act. The film may play its hand a bit too early from a narrative standpoint, but this maniacal sense of style keeps things on edge even after key revelations. While *Creepy* never attains the terrifying ambiguity of David Fincher's *Zodiac* or Bong Joon-ho's *Memories of Murder*, it's a devilish reminder that sinister forces could always be close by. Just look out the window and wave.

GLENN HEATH JR

YOU
KNOW
THE
NAME

YOU
KNOW
THE
NUMBER





CHI-RAQ

Directed by_
SPIKE LEE
Starring_
TEYONAH PARRIS
NICK CANNON
WESLEY SNIPES
Released_
2 DECEMBER

ANTICIPATION_
'A Spike Lee joint' just doesn't carry the same weight as it used to.

ENJOYMENT_
Dynamite stuff from an artist at the top of his game.

IN RETROSPECT_
Astonishing. Up there with Lee's very best.

“When I wrote this script, I had a black audience in mind. But that's not to say that nobody else can enjoy it. It has been my contention all along that a black film directed by a black person can still be universal.” This was Spike Lee speaking to *The New York Times* in 1996 about his debut feature *She's Gotta Have It*. Twenty years later those words ring especially true of his brilliant, urgent new film *Chi-Raq*, which reaffirms Lee as not only the most articulate proponent of black agency and identity in America today but also one of the most astute social commentators of his generation.

Set in Chicago – so-called ‘Chi-Raq’ because of its reputation as one of America's most dangerous cities; the 2016 death toll has already eclipsed last year's (the victims are disproportionately young black men with shooting the most common cause of death) – the film transposes Aristophanes' comedy play *Lysistrata*, about abstinence in Ancient Greece, to present-day Englewood, a notorious neighbourhood situated on the city's Southside. It's here following the accidental death of a child – a routine occurrence which goes unchecked in a community where it's safer to say nothing than speak out – that Lysistrata (Teyonah Parris) decides enough is enough. She moves to unite the girlfriends of rival gang members by proposing a sex strike, much to the derision of her gangster/rapper beau Demetrius aka ‘Chi-Raq’ (Nick Cannon). But their rallying cry ‘No Peace, No Pussy’ catches on, and before long women's groups everywhere

are commanding the attention of the world's media by staging peaceful, impassioned protests of their own.

Not since 2000's *Bamboozled* has Lee zeroed in on the root cause of a deep-seated social problem with such raw focus. Crucially his latest satirical polemic, which could best be described as a hip hop musical with a socially-conscious beat, doesn't force the issue either. And while gun culture and gang violence are often taken as uniquely American concerns, the film's scope is ultimately much broader than its title suggests. In an early scene Lysistrata is shown reading up on real-life peace activist Leymah Gbowee, who led a women's movement which helped bring an end to the Second Liberian Civil War in 2003. Chicago (and by extension America) may not exactly be at war with itself, but it's telling that Lee chooses to draw parallels between his country's current polarised sociopolitical climate and that still unstable but forward looking region.

The danger is that, irrespective of the film's incendiary message, *Chi-Raq* provides such high entertainment value as to somehow trivialise the actual loss of life seen in Chicago and many other cities like it. Yet the point here is to stress the power of mass protest, to underline the fact that positive action can and does lead to progress. ‘Hope’ and ‘Change’ may seem like broken promises to some, but regardless of who is in the Oval Office by the time this film is released, people won't stop believing in a better tomorrow.

ADAM WOODWARD

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THE_UNKNOWN_GIRL

Directed by_
**JEAN-PIERRE &
 LUC DARDENNE**
 Starring_
**ADÈLE HAENEL
 OLIVIER BONNAUD
 LOUKA MINNELLI**
 Released_
23 DECEMBER

4

ANTICIPATION_

It's a new Dardennes film, but can they keep their hot streak going?

3

ENJOYMENT_

Adèle Haenel is a joy, but she seems to be operating in the Dardennes' version of a TV soap.

3

IN RETROSPECT_

Has its moments, but this time the magic doesn't quite happen.

At their best, the Dardenne siblings construct compelling dramatic puzzles which don't appear to be constructed at all. Instead their stories mark some inevitable destiny set in motion by their hard-pressed characters' agonising decisions. Films like *The Son* and *L'Enfant* generate a palpable moral force precisely because they don't appear to be pushing our buttons, just showing us a drama so real it doesn't need any music or fancy camerawork. The Dardennes' genius though, is to conceive and stage these confrontational everyday tales in a way that's so persuasive we rarely even conceive of the machinery and endeavour which has put them in place. True, the casting of marquee actresses like Cécile de France in *The Kid with a Bike* and Marion Cotillard in *Two Days, One Night* has made their recent stuff a little more conventional, but even then the materia has remained strong enough to impact at almost the same level as their earlier high-fibre fare.

Actually, Cotillard was due to return in this latest offering, about a young doctor in a rough canal-side corner of Liège, haunted by the fate of a young prostitute who'd buzzed after closing time on the surgery door and been ignored. The girl was then murdered nearby, leaving the medic ravaged by guilt and keen to do something, anything to make amends. It's certainly a poser of a set-up, and with Adèle Haenel replacing Cotillard in the central role, the fact she doesn't bring the same cinematic baggage with her (she's best known as one of the aquatic ensemble in Céline Sciamma's

Water Lilies) makes her already sharply focused performance all the more convincing. She's a good doctor. She cares. She's also, however, a bit of a control freak. So is she driven by inner goodness to try and find the girl's killer, or is it just that she can't allow anything in her ordered little world to spiral without her control?

So far, so absorbing, but somehow the old chestnut of the doc who turns detective just belongs to the world of afternoon TV, and, uncharacteristically, the Dardennes falter when it comes to their artful way with plotting. The machinery here is all too obvious, since the unfolding of the story essentially depends on various individuals confessing their knowledge of events. The dogged physician is certainly a determined woman but carries no physical threat or legal authority, making progress only too convenient. What's more, every time the buzzer goes at the surgery, we start thinking, 'Oh, that'll be another nugget of exposition then', underlining the loss of credibility crucial to the Dardennes' familiar mastery. We keep watching, of course, but it's all just slightly ordinary.

What registers most strongly, in fact, is a moment outside the creaky plot mechanics, where the stressed-out Haenel has to drive somewhere in a hurry, and the camera keeps her profile in tight focus as she screeches round the streets. Her performance is so on-it, we're there with her. Believing, hoping, caring for her. Shame the rest of the movie never hits the same peak of intensity.

TREVOR JOHNSTON

ADÈLE_ _ _ HAENEL_ _



The young French star discusses becoming “the minimum human” for her challenging latest role.

She is one of Europe's great young actors, so it should come as no surprise that she's the star of a new film by Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne – *The Unknown Girl*. She burst onto the scene in 2007 with *Water Lilies*, and picked up a Caesar award for her turn in 2014's *Love At First Fight*.

LWLies: How did you secure a role in the film? Haenel: Well I didn't have an audition. I met with the Dardenne brothers at an awards ceremony in France. I made a joke about something stupid and I felt really embarrassed. So I said, 'Okay that was stupid' and I went away. Three months after they called me and said, 'D'you wanna work with us?' I've never experienced anything like that. It was cool.

What was the toughest challenge working with the Dardennes? The biggest challenge for me was to be calm. To hold back my gestures. Speaking clearly, calmly and softly too. And also because, for me, the idea was to build this character of whom we don't know any history,

but who still has a social background. It was a journey. She's someone that has a really careful relationship to objects. The way she moves is also really careful. When she grabs an object, she takes it with the knowledge that she has a relation to it. I think it says a lot about her relation to the world without having to speak about it. So that was a challenge for me, because in France I'm known for being a bit violent.

Were you aware of the challenges you'd have to face? I always try to put myself in situations where I'll ask myself: Why did I say yes? I should have stayed home and watched TV. But I can't go back now. That's what I try to do because if I just follow my own personal path I will go into a more stiff, more secure route. When I get old I want to be more defined, and what I try to do in my work is just break all this fake self-knowledge. It's just about remaining flexible. That's why getting out of the comfort zone is important. At the beginning you're scared of it, and in a way it's what Jenny does in the movie – she gets out of the comfort zone. At the beginning you're scared, but then you realise that opening yourself up to alternate realities makes you scared.

Did you enjoy playing Jenny? It's complicated to explain why we like to play tough characters. I think I liked it because I like working around an idea that I cannot express in words – I can only express it in acting. When you play a joyful character, that doesn't make you a more joyful person. But in a way, I would say you are contaminated by the fake life you're living.

Do you find acting to be a kind of psychotherapy? Maybe, yeah in a way? I think the character of Jenny is more like... I don't think I built a character. What I did was destroy my own personality. I destroyed everything in order to go to what I'd call 'the minimum human'. I think we all have empathy and I think we sometimes have to make it sleep. We do it in order to be alive. It's all about the awakening of this part of your soul. I think in real life you'd identify yourself with a way of being and decide: that's who I am. You turn that way of being into your essence, which I think is the point where it becomes fake. And that's what we have to explore. There are so many different ways of being, and this makes us more conscious of the fact that we can never truly define ourselves.

Is it easier to act without words? I don't want to give anybody lessons on that. But you don't use words to explain. Sometimes you have to, but I always feel a bit uncomfortable with that. You have to agree before you speak, otherwise it takes too long. I think in this specific situation with the actors, when you read a script, you don't read a script, you actually read about an obsession. What is the obsession in the movie?

Can film change the world? Maybe not the world, but I think it can change people's lives. I want people to be equal. Arthouse movies are especially important in the way they belong to the spectator. They can be seen in so many different ways. I think that's where arthouse movies and blockbusters are different. In blockbusters, everyone sees the same movie 🌐



GIRLS_LOST

Directed by **ALEXANDRA-THERESE KEINING**
 Starring **MANDUS BERG, ADAM DAHLGREN,**
MALIN ERIKSSON
 Released **4 NOVEMBER**

What would you do if you could spend a few hours living as a different gender? Director Alexandra-Therese Keining's *Girls Lost* answers this question and much more as it follows teen trio Kim (Tuva Jagell), Momo (Louise Nyvall) and Bella (Wilma Holmén) as they discover a mysterious enchanted plant that, when ingested, temporarily turns them into boys. But it's not just their sex that changes, the world around them and their perception of it does too. The nectar of the flower infuses them with new-found confidence and spurs a drug-fuelled rebellion that frees them from their daily repressions. Masks, lanterns, fairy lights and a bonfire in a forest at night – the girls dance under the moonlight to the twinkle of girlhood in a neon wilderness full of wonder and promise. But all is not as light-hearted as it seems. Targeted by sexist bullies that go as far as ganging up to try to rip Bella's top off, the girls are in a fight to figure out who they really are.

Fenced into a murky world of violence, marginality and sexual confusion, the girls' belief in the magical flower stems from a deeply rooted desire to be treated as equals. An androgynous and pretty character to begin with, the flower affirms Kim's gender crisis and addresses transsexuality in a way that adds weight to what might otherwise seem a little basic. Accompanied by '80s inspired synth, complete with shots of teens peddling hurriedly around their local suburban neighbourhood, there's a clear nod to coming of age dramas of that era, but with a contemporary twist that spotlights LGBTQ+ issues. The moon is an ever-present motif in the film that reflects the fear and mystery the girls face. Holding within it the totality of the feminine experience, the moon's various cycles of change mirror the lives of the girls as they evolve and grow through their unique experiences. But do the girls embrace their femininity or reject it? **LAUREN THOMPSON**

ANTICIPATION_ *Who hasn't wondered what it'd be like to switch genders for a bit?*



ENJOYMENT_ *An imaginative and touching drama that explores sexuality and gender identity with creative flair.*



IN RETROSPECT_ *Successfully explores common themes through a unique yet simple concept.*



FRANCOFONIA

Directed by **ALEXANDR SOKUROV**
 Starring **LOUIS-DO DE LENCQUESAING,**
BENJAMIN UTZERATH, VINCENT NEMETH
 Released **11 NOVEMBER**

You can't help but be stunned by the insouciant confidence displayed in Aleksandr Sokurov's dazzling plea for society to take better care of the art that it produces. We gather up the treasures of antiquity and store them in an impenetrable fortress like the Louvre. But nowhere is immune to the ravages of the environment or, worse, the destructive hand of man. *Francofonia* is a mellifluous, multi-disciplined examination of the ways art helps to define who we are as well as being a physical marker of a specific moment in history. "What is France without the Louvre?" he asks. The film is also in thrall to those who make it their business to quietly exert their limited power to prevent our cultural legacy from falling into the wrong hands.

Jacques Jaujard is the hero of the piece, a taciturn bureaucrat who went against the collaborationist grain of the Vichy government to prevent the Nazis looting the Louvre during the occupation of 1940. He was secretly assisted in his endeavours by Franz von Wolff-Metternich, a Nazi art historian charged with indexing the art, to give collectors like Hitler and Goebbels first dibs on the spoils. Sokurov isn't interested so much in the mechanics of the pair's scheme, more the intellectual drive behind it. He's clearly impressed that people might risk their own lives to articulate their belief that art is more than a commodity to be traded, or a status symbol for the owner. Maybe we need more people like that now? Though there are dramatised sequences with actors playing the central parts, this is foremost an essay film that attempts (and largely succeeds) in placing this tale of administrative derring do into a wider cultural context. Like much of Sokurov's work, this film looks to the ugly corners of life and history and locates profound bitter, beauty. **DAVID JENKINS**

ANTICIPATION_ *Sokurov's willingness to make a film that fits the material is always interesting.*



ENJOYMENT_ *A simple statement made with effortless poeticism.*



IN RETROSPECT_ *In praise of art, but also a reminder that we need to treasure what we have.*





UNITED_STATES_OF_LOVE

Directed by **TOMASZ WASILEWSKI**
 Starring **JULIA KIJOWSKA, MAGDALENA CIELECKA, DOROTA KOLAK**
 Released **18 NOVEMBER**

Only with great irony would you name a film so starved of emotion *United States of Love*. A thematic study of unhealthy relationships and obsession prompted by loneliness, director Tomasz Wasilewski's film imparts an atmosphere thick with despair. Without introduction we jump right into the loosely connected lives of Agata (Julia Kijowska), Iza (Magdalena Cielecka) Renata (Dorota Kolak), and Marzena (Marta Nieradkiewicz). Think *Love, Actually*, but even more depressing. Agata is trapped in an unhappy marriage, empty of physical and emotional intimacy to the extent that she winces and brushes her husband away when he tries to touch her. Iza tries to pursue an affair with a man recently widowed, enduring physical aggression, taunting, threats, lies and betrayal to no end. Meanwhile, Renata obsesses over her young fame-seeking neighbour Marzena, even feigning injury as an excuse to talk to her.

Distanced and isolating shots emphasise the women's shared loneliness. Characters deliver their lines with a weary disinterest. As they strive unsuccessfully for happiness, we see Gloria and Agata settle for pure physicality in an attempt to feel something. A moment of climactic potential between Gloria and her lover's daughter is muted both literally, and in impact by its ambiguity and lack of follow-up, while the film's bizarre and disturbing end leaves a bad taste. A film doesn't have to be happy or positive to be deemed enjoyable, but the tone here is relentlessly bleak, the coldness palpable. 'What does love give us?' says a priest early on. The answer to that is grief, pure and simple. Whether sour, compulsive, or simply unattainable – we see love in its many forms, none of them pretty. Visually stunning though it may be, *United States of Love* makes for soul-sapping viewing.

LAUREN THOMPSON

ANTICIPATION_

Its screenplay got a nod of approval from the Berlin jury.

4

ENJOYMENT_ *Despite aesthetic merit, it's a depressing and emotionally barren film that fails to hold interest.*

3

IN RETROSPECT_

You'll need a pick-me-up once you're done.

2



LE_FILS_DE_JOSEPH

Directed by **EUGÈNE GREEN**
 Starring **VICTOR EZENFIS, MATHIEU AMALRIC, FABRIZIO RONGIONE**
 Released **16 DECEMBER**

You could argue that the films of French director Eugène Green are a vacuum of emotion. He instructs his actors to intone lines directly to camera. The dialogue is slow and mannered, every syllable is roundly enunciated. Characters in his films don't really talk to one another, they communicate in the way robots or computers might. And yet, for all the effort he takes to expunge anything that might be described as realism, his films exert a strange narcotic grip. By scraping back artificial emotion, you're left with something very pure. His new film, *Le Fils de Joseph*, recounts the nativity in modern day Paris, reframing the immaculate conception as a single mother whose partner left her because she chose not to abort their child.

Troubled schoolboy Vincent (Victor Ezenfis) is that child, discovering his true nature and vowing vengeance on his estranged, neglectful father, Oscar (Mathieu Amalric). But, his plan takes a turn for the bizarre when he bumps into Oscar's amiable brother, Joseph (Fabrizio Rongione), and the pair become fast friends. Having to stick to this fanciful conceit does dampen some of the impulsive, transcendent qualities seen in Green's most exemplary work such as 2004's *Le Pont des Arts* and 2008's *The Portuguese Nun*. Plus, the occasional cut-aways to paintings and music (a baroque church concert) feel like stock directorial tics rather than necessities for this story. But the film does manage to catch you off guard, mixing absurdism and sincerity, comedy and tragedy, the realistic and the surreal, the modern and the classical and, finally, pulsing emotion and brittle formalism. *Le Fils de Joseph* actually makes for the perfect entry point for brave travellers looking to explore the wonderful world of this singular director. **DAVID JENKINS**

ANTICIPATION_

One of Europe's most idiosyncratic and interesting directors returns.

4

ENJOYMENT_

The Christmas movie it's okay to like.

4

IN RETROSPECT_

Not Green's best, but certainly his most fun and accessible.

3



PATERSON

Directed by...

JIM JARMUSCH

Starring...

ADAM DRIVER

GOSHIFTEH FARAHANI

BARRY SHABAKA HENLEY

Released...

25 NOVEMBER

5

ANTICIPATION_

People aren't walking out after screenings, they're floating.

5

ENJOYMENT_

A perfectly paced and spacious vehicle that finds sublime meaning amid routine.

5

IN RETROSPECT_

Poetry in motion.

“They’re just words,” explains Paterson (Adam Driver) referring to his secret book of poetry. The statement rings true and it rings false. Words are the waves that Paterson surfs with his mind as his body drives a bus through the New Jersey suburbs. Words fill books by his favourite poet, William Carlos Williams. Words are how he navigates the ever-changing creative enthusiasms of his girlfriend, Laura (an effervescent Golshifteh Farahani). Still, words are the last thing to fall into place. What comes first in this character, and in Jim Jarmusch’s immaculate

film, is a desire to move with care through the world.

Jarmusch uses the rhythm of routine as the heartbeat for a story that begins on a Monday and ends on a Sunday. His camera frames sleeping, spooning bodies from a bird’s-eye view. Then Paterson awakes, checks his watch, takes neatly folded clothes from a chair, eats Cheerios and goes about the business of normality for seven days in a row. As in Chantal Akerman’s benchmark of domestic-life-in-miniature, *Jeanne Dielman, 23, Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles*, from 1975, we are immersed in a world that has a regular pulse. Any flickers of change become evident and engrossing.

Dynamics are set by the relationship between Paterson and Laura. They are both creative, but while he steadily fills one notebook, saying little outside of it, she provides a running commentary on her newest projects, which change daily. Production designer Mark Freidberg, set decorator Lydia Marks and costume designer Catherine George have fashioned a setting in their shared home that is an extension of both characters, representing his neatness, her mania for monochrome, and one bonus element: a scene-stealing English bulldog named Marvin (played by the now deceased canine performer, Nellie).

Paterson’s orbit is populated by people that are inherently good, even if passions throw them off balance. Those familiar with Jarmusch’s back catalogue will recognise his distinctive dialogue: articulate, pained in a worldly way, alive to life’s ironies, ridiculous, kind-of-cool and kind-of-not. Paterson likes the company he keeps, but tends to listen rather than talk. He is in almost every moment of the film, and so we process him processing events. We hear what he hears and see who he sees. Driving the bus, he eavesdrops on passengers. Arriving home, he listens to Laura. Taking Marvin for an evening walk, he stops for one beer at the local bar run by Doc (Barry Shabaka Henley). In this latter part of the day’s ritual, he may say a few extra words, but only in the name of keeping the

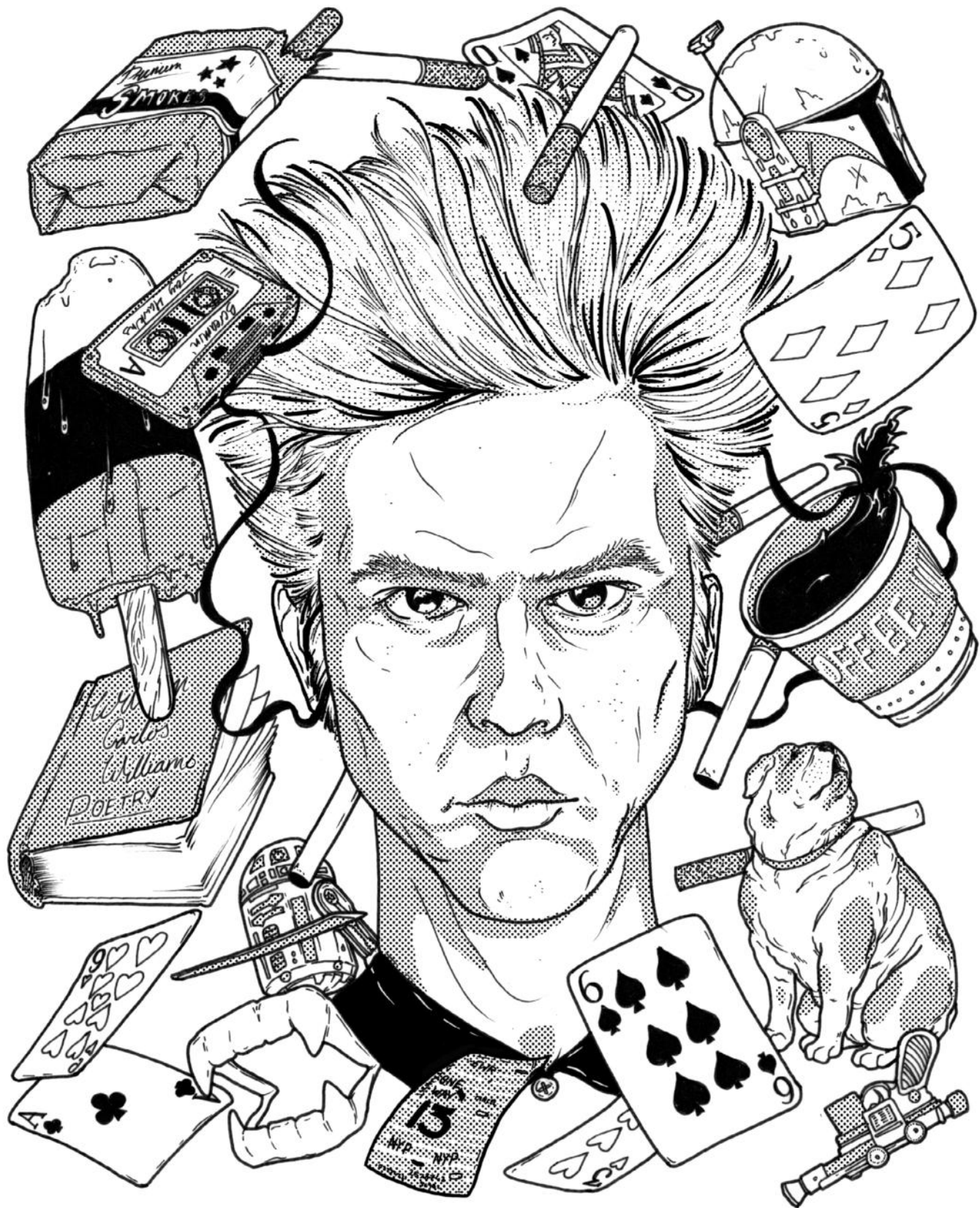
bonhomie rolling. He is an attentive character, ideally qualified to be a poet.

Everything is structured to evoke poetry through its measured pacing. The space left between events and interactions shows Jarmusch at his most poised. Silences are never protracted; their conclusions never abrupt. People bombard Paterson with their issues and then pass on by. There is downtime in his day at which point the notebook comes out and the delicate atmosphere is made manifest through words. Poems (really written by Ron Padgett) are narrated in Adam Driver’s voice and appear on screen in his handwriting. They are the visible pay off to the suggestiveness of his silence and an adorable expression of his rich soul.

The most obvious fabrication in a film designed to say something natural and true is the recurring presence of twins. Literal twins have cameos, and segue to a deeper belief that you can always find a meaningful reflection in your surroundings if you are willing to be calm and still. Driver embodies calmness and stillness. This performance cements his status as an actor whose physical command matches his ability to telegraph inner life. It’s a cliché to say that the greatest actors make the smallest actions magnetic, but it’s true of Driver who makes the non-demonstrative act of listening feel like it means the world.

Love is a motif because of Paterson and Laura’s relationship. It’s not the usual movie love. There’s no sex, plenty of distance, and still it is love. They both graft at maintaining their relationship in ways so contrasting that it’s almost conflict. Harmony is not to be taken for granted in *Paterson*. Every conversation in the film hums with a meaning so refined that it’s only just palpable. Seemingly casual exchanges are rooted in a desire to show individuals connecting. For these characters, effort is constant, banality inevitable. And so, in the moments that erupt out of nowhere, when there is a chance to really speak to a person in need and in reach, a small gesture is the stuff of poetry. **SOPHIE MONKS KAUFMAN**





JIM_JARMUSCH

Everyone's a poet in *Paterson*, the latest (greatest?) film from Jim Jarmusch. We meet the indie idol to discuss freedom, the musicality of movies and how Man Ray made films for his band to play along to.

Jim Jarmusch, one of the leaders of the New York City DIY scene of the '80s and one of the biggest names in independent filmmaking since then, has always placed moments of artistic appreciation in his films. Even his more genre-oriented movies, *Ghost Dog* or *Dead Man*, subvert expectations by allowing their protagonists to pick up more books than weapons. Jarmusch's cultural voracity hits its peak with both of his new movies this year. *Gimme Danger* - a doc about The Stooges that Jarmusch made as a gift to his friend Iggy Pop - is a deep dive into the band's cultural history and influence, while *Paterson* uses the casual genius of William Carlos Williams as a frame to celebrate the creativity of a content bus driver (Adam Driver) and his wife (Golshifteh Farahani). *Paterson* depicts artistic engagement as a road to a fulfilling life, so we discussed Jarmusch's creative process and how he feels about the cultural landscape now.

LWLies: Was it difficult to receive funding, or maybe just a home, for a low stakes film like *Paterson*? Jarmusch: Well, it's always getting harder and harder. And yet, I was very lucky to get K5 in Germany. That became world sales, and then we got Amazon. I got a little bit more from Le Pacte, whom I've worked with for years. So, it worked out. The business side is not so good for me, but we had the ability to do whatever we wanted to do. They had faith in us as filmmakers. They didn't interfere with us in any way. It was good.

You're mentioning all these studios. Are you noticing any changes in the industry from when you were starting out making independent films? Oh yeah, it's completely different. The whole theatrical thing is very different. Now the majority of the market is streaming. It used to be that films were just theatrical and secondarily video tapes and DVDs. It's sort of flipped now as far as what's the biggest share. Therefore, how people perceive what you make has changed. It's completely different.

Do you think these changes are perhaps for the best? I don't want to trouble myself with thinking they're bad, because they are. To preserve my sanity and ability to continue is to accept what is and do my best to make something that we're happy to get out there. So, I can't worry too much about it. But I've been lucky. Amazon and K5 have been great. They've been nice, respectful, and very pleasant.

This is your first electronic score. Was it exciting to step into that realm? I assume it's a very complex and deep world. When I was even writing the film, I knew that I wanted an electronic score. I love the history of electronic music, as I do many types of music. My first inclination was I'm going to get different people that I like. I'm going to get something from Boards of Canada, maybe I get something from Brian Eno, and then I put together a score from all these things. I started doing that in the editing room, and I found out it wasn't really

ideal, because it wasn't quite fitting. The piece might be too foreboding, it might be too dark, it might be too light, it might be too sweet. Carter Logan - who was a producer on the film and has worked with me for years - and I are in a band together called SOURL. Along with our stage shows, we have been doing live scores to Man Ray's surrealist films from the '20s. We're going to do more next year. We love doing that, and when we do that Carter plays drums, he has a way to trigger samples, and he has a synth. I have an electric guitar, an effects pedal and a synth. Fonzy (Affonso Goncalves, the editor) said, 'Look man, you and Carter have synths, why don't you sketch a few things and just try.' I was like, 'In all my free time, Fonzy?' He said 'Well, just try something over the weekend'. So we did, and it was working really well. So, over three weekends, using Garageband and a box of stuff, we created this. Now we're going to put it on an album. I'm going to go away and expand and make the longer pieces work. Our only rule was no sequencing. I'm not against sequencing, but we didn't want to let the synths play themselves; we'll play them analogue. That was our only thing. Carter might have added in a little electric bass, and I'd put in an acoustic guitar and use wine glasses as glass violins. I mixed them way back because they really pierced through. But we just used those things.

It's good to hear there's some sort of connection between Man Ray and *Paterson*. In a roundabout way. The coolest thing was



when we performed a couple of nights to over a thousand people in New York at the Man Ray thing. After the second night a stoner guy came up to us and said, 'Dude, it is so cool that Man Ray made videos for your music before you were born!' We were like 'Thank you. That's our best compliment.' We loved it.

Paterson has this great affinity for creativity in people in traditionally non-creative careers. Do you think there's a big difference between the type of person who would do that and the type of person who would actually make a career out of that creative thing? There are no poets that were ever in it for the money. Nobody makes money being a poet. You scrounge, you have another job. Wallace Stevens was an insurance executive. Frank O'Hara was the curator for the Museum of Modern Art in New York. There's a kind of purity of intent if you're a poet. You're not doing it for the money or the fame, you're doing it because the form is strong and your hand is strong. I believe artists should make things that they would like. As soon as you start thinking about, 'How will the world receive it?' and 'will I be famous?', then you're doing something else. That's okay to do that, but I can't do that. When we make films, we make something we would like to see. When Carter and I make music, we're making something we would like to hear. If other people find it, then that's great. If they don't, we're not going to change it so that they might. It's not the way to approach it for me.

Have you seen much of Driver or Farahani's films before shooting? What qualities of them did you think would work well as this really happy domestic couple? I hadn't seen much of either of them - just a little bit. I saw Adam do some small things in different films and I heard some interviews with him that were very impressive and made me want to

meet him. I like his look, I like his approach to acting, I like his voice, and I like his rhythm. So on meeting him I was like, 'Yeah, this guy is great.'

I first saw Golshifteh a long time ago in 2006 in a film called *Half Moon* - the Kurdish-Iranian film. Beautiful film. She was quite young when I saw her in that. I've seen her in a few other films since then. I just loved the idea of not making Laura an American actress. I thought, 'I'm going to have trouble from K5 or Amazon when I say I want Golshifteh for a lead role. I have to tell them who I'm casting. They didn't have the right to say no, but they had the right to say their opinion. Their opinion was 'She's fantastic. We love her.' Amazon was like 'She's great. What a great idea.' I wasn't asking their permission, but that was a nice thing. I just love her, she's fantastic.

Have you seen *About Elly* by Asghar Farhadi? She's great in that. Yes I have. She is. She's great.

Do you think young creative types today have an outlet similar to something like punk in the 70s or the energy in New York in the 80s? And are you seeing any creative modes for dissent? Creativity and daring creativity are like weeds - you can't stop them growing even if you wanted to. It has to do with wanting to say something, having inspiration and ignoring social media or the negative parts like, 'how many likes do I get?' Of course, there are people all over this planet. There are little gardens in filmmaking and music. You just have to find it, but certainly it's out there. There's a lot of great stuff going on, you just have to look for it.

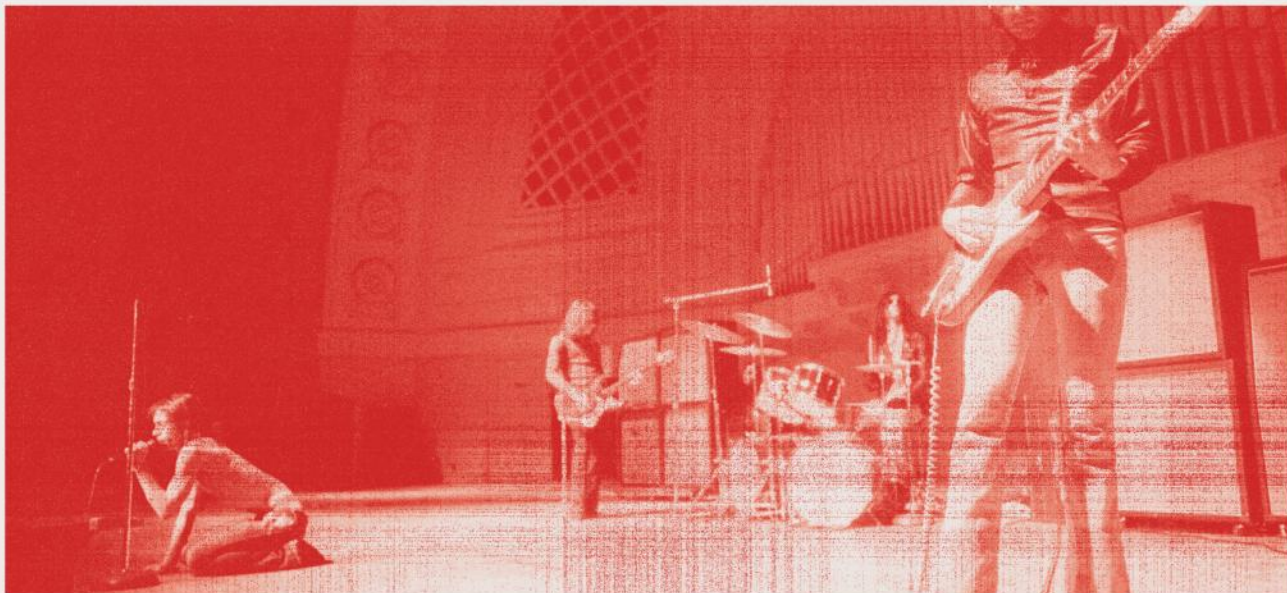
Could you think of any specific people - maybe younger people - who could do this? I find things. I just discovered a band from Canada called Nadja. It's two

drone musicians. I love a band from Chile called Föllakzoid. I don't know if you know the electronic music of Ty Braxton. He's ground-breaking - the future of fucking music. I love Dead Skeletons from Iceland. I love Blanck Mass with one of the guys from Fuck Buttons. There's a lot of stuff. I love this guitarist Steve Gun. He played for a while with Kurt Vile. I like a psych band from the West Coast called Eternal Tapestry. I like these two girls called The Casket Girls. I like a lot of stuff. I like some more mainstream hip hop stuff. It's not normally my taste but I think Kendrick Lamar is a fucking musical genius. I love Run the Jewels, but that's not young, unknown stuff. There's a lot out there. I could go home and make you a good list, but I can't do it right off of my head.

Punk was about questioning authority and seeing energy. Do you think the form of drone music or the content of something like Run the Jewels are just as radical? I think you can be radical even from a mainstream place like Kendrick Lamar, or from a very underground place. But it's found in the people who aren't looking for mainstream recognition. That's the dilemma of it. True punk wasn't trying to get mainstream FM airplay. They had something to say, and they fucking said it. That's not dead, that spirit is there. It's even more valuable now than ever.

Is there any advice you'd give to Jim Jarmusch of 1980? No, I can't even think that way.

Do you still keep up with your cohorts of that time? I'm curious specifically about Amos Poe. Oh yeah, I keep in touch with a lot of my friends back then - Amos Poe and James Nares. I see lots of people. I just saw Lee Quinones, the master graffiti artist. I see Charlie Ahearn. I see a lot of people for sure still 🍷



GIMME_DANGER

Directed by_
JIM JARMUSCH
 Starring_
IGGY POP
JAMES WILLIAMSON
SCOTT ASHETON
 Released_
18 NOVEMBER

ANTICIPATION_

4

One of the coolest directors profiles one of the coolest bands.

ENJOYMENT_

3

Very entertaining, but not especially probing.

IN RETROSPECT_

3

Could do with more raw power of its own.

Jim Jarmusch directing a film about The Stooges is one of those perfect matches of artist and subject. Though the resultant documentary, *Gimme Danger*, is, at the very least, good, there's the persistent sense throughout that something's missing.

For one thing, anyone looking for recognisable idiosyncrasies of Jarmusch's fiction work will be disappointed. Structurally, this is, for the most part, firmly in the talking heads and archive material mode, with stories largely delivered by James Osterberg (aka Iggy Pop) and still-living collaborators in a variety of workplace or homey backdrops. And the film sticks almost exclusively in adoration mode, positing The Stooges as the greatest rock and roll band right off the bat and rarely delving into more objective criticism of the group's output, bar guitarist James Williamson lamenting the mixing of third album *Raw Power*.

There is some creative flair, however. When it comes to making things visually interesting, Jarmusch employs an Errol Morris-ish technique of using old film clips as means of humorous punctuation for anecdotes not covered in archive footage. Complementing this, there are also a few animated sequences of the band's escapades as young men, with a look and style that's almost akin to Terry Gilliam's *Monty Python* work if it were spliced together with *Beavis and Butthead*.

The film is dedicated to four band members who have passed away, including drummer Scott Asheton, who is interviewed in the doc (including

once alongside Iggy) but died in 2014 before its completion. His brother, fellow bandmate Ron, features heavily in archive interview form only, due to his passing in 2009. Considering the dwindling number of key figures to speak to, Jarmusch might have been tempted to make this an all-encompassing doc about Iggy, especially considering their previous collaborations with his fiction features, but there is a resolute commitment on his part to keep this solely about The Stooges.

Any brief discussion of solo output tends to be related to everyone outside of the frontman, while Iggy's foray to Berlin with David Bowie in the late '70s, which resulted in his two most famous solo albums, is amusingly retained as a throwaway comment. Nor will you find Iggy's '90s resurgence brought up with an expected clip of 'Lust for Life' scoring Ewan McGregor's mad dash in *Trainspotting*. Interestingly, Todd Haynes' *Velvet Goldmine*, which featured McGregor as an Iggy analogue, is directly attributed with sowing the seeds for the band's early '00s reunion, thanks to various non-Iggy members reconvening to rework some of their classic songs for the soundtrack.

Inevitably, though, Iggy's survival means he's the film's anchor, and it's his captivating storytelling, full of both articulate reminiscences and daft flights of deranged fancy, that helps to overlook the film's overall lack of weight in light of the tragedies it tends to only flirt with rather than engage full-on. **JOSH SLATER-WILLIAMS**



A_UNITED_KINGDOM

Directed by_
AMMA ASSANTE
Starring_
ROSAMUND PIKE
DAVID OYELOWO
TOM FELTON
Released_
25 NOVEMBER

When Ruth Williams (Rosamund Pike) and Seretse Khama (David Oyelowo) met and fell in love in 1947, they knew their families would disapprove of the union. Yet they probably didn't expect to find the full weight of national governments conspiring against them. She was a white Londoner working as an office clerk, he was an African prince and heir to the throne of Bechuanaland (now Botswana). Their marriage was seen as a transgressive, provocative act, crossing lines of race, class and politics. It was met with a particularly dim view in Bechuanaland's neighbouring country, South Africa, whose Prime Minister called it "nauseating."

All of this is fertile emotional and political territory to explore, but *A United Kingdom* is not up to the task. Director Amma Asante and screenwriter Guy Hibbert (working from Susan Williams' acclaimed book 'Colour Bar') have smoothed the edges and flattened the complexities of Seretse and Ruth's story, filling it with one-dimensional characters and trite expository dialogue. The British authorities are represented by a pair of shady diplomats played by Jack Davenport and Tom Felton, seemingly designed to elicit hisses from the audience whenever they appear on screen. Their sneering superciliousness is so pronounced it is insulting both to the central couple and the audience. "Do you know what apartheid means?" Davenport's Sir Alistair Canning asks Ruth early in the film, and we might wonder if he's addressing her or us.

There are so many fascinating historical wrinkles left frustratingly unexplored here, notably Winston

Churchill's role in the drama, protesting against Seretse's exile from his homeland when in opposition before reneging on his promise to reinstate him after coming to power. Instead, Asante focuses on the love story, but the sketchily developed romance between Seretse and Ruth makes it feel like the film is built on unstable foundations. They meet, court, marry and are ostracised by their families in the space of a few brief scenes. We get little sense of the deep devotion binding them together. In fact, the two stars are more impressive when they are apart than when they're together. Pike's strongest scenes occur in the second half of the film, as she attempts to ingratiate herself into the lives of the African women for whom she is a most unwelcome queen. Oyelowo, meanwhile, is at his best in smaller moments: a flash of fear as he plays down rumours of rebellion, or being forced to hold his tongue in the face of British condescension.

Curiously, however, Oyelowo's tearful speeches carry none of the force that the actor brought to Ava DuVernay's roistering Martin Luther King story, *Selma*, perhaps because his triumph here feels too easy. *A United Kingdom* is both dramatically and visually unimaginative. It comprises a series of inert conversations followed by repetitive shots of African scenery, and the filmmakers' decision to follow the path of least resistance does their subject matter a disservice. With this film and *Belle*, Amma Asante has certainly shown she has a knack for digging up forgotten stories from British history that deserve to be told. Unfortunately a film like this is likely to be remembered as little more than a footnote.

PHIL CONCANNON

ANTICIPATION_

3

It's a great true story, but they don't always make for great films...

ENJOYMENT_

2

So bland and simplistic you're likely to forget it even as you watch it.

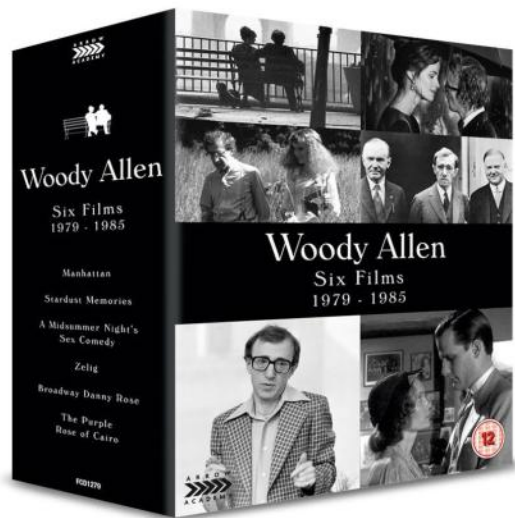
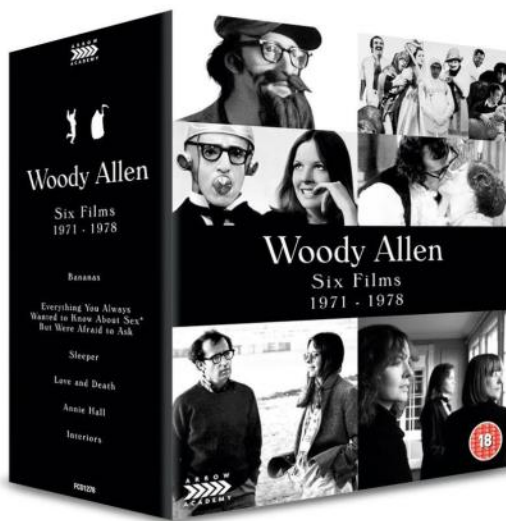
IN RETROSPECT_

2

You should probably read the book instead.



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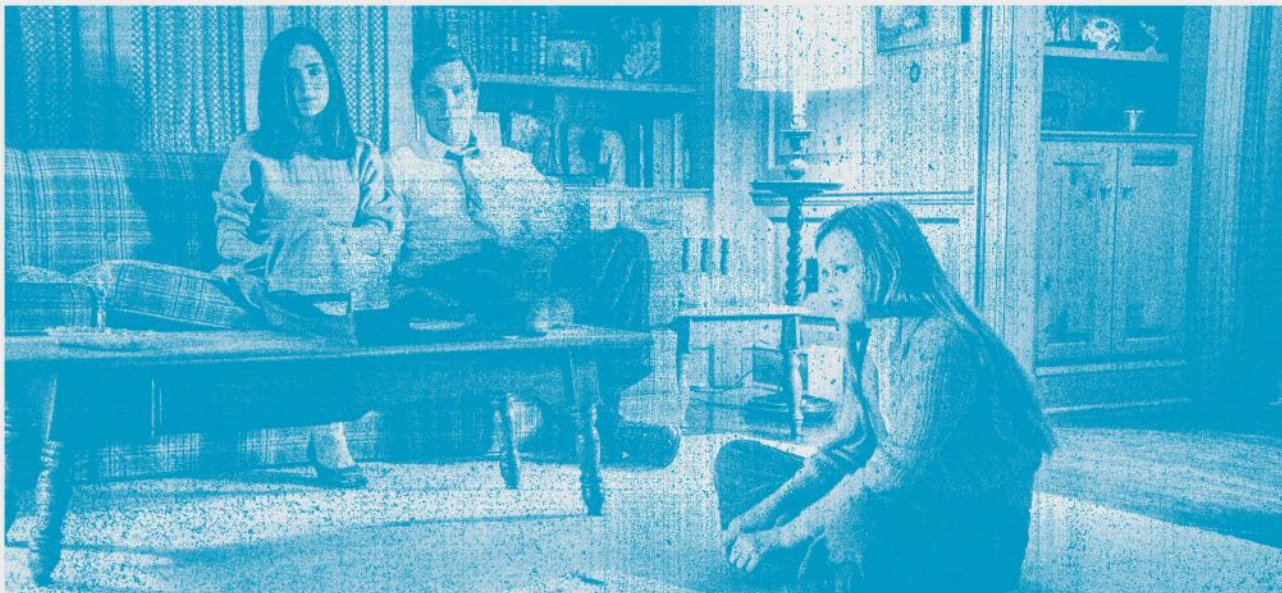
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AMERICAN_PASTORAL

Directed by_
EWAN MCGREGOR
 Starring_
JENNIFER CONNELLY
DAKOTA FANNING
EWAN MCGREGOR
 Released_
25 NOVEMBER

ANTICIPATION_

3

Seems a bold choice for a debut, and who knows what McGregor can do as a director?

ENJOYMENT_

2

Mildly boring, often offensive and repeatedly frustrating.

IN RETROSPECT_

2

A more audacious adaptation would have been welcome.

If choosing to adapt a Philip Roth novel for the big screen is a challenge in itself, one which automatically opens up comparison with the widely admired source material, it is surely even more daring as a choice for a directorial debut. Adding to the difficulty, the director in question here is Ewan McGregor, a figure whose established status may not work in his favour in the eyes of a public always keen to pour scorn on the vanity projects of successful Hollywood actors. It seems fairer not to judge the film by its cover, as it were, and to consider its qualities as a standalone work.

The film follows successful Jewish American entrepreneur Seymour Levov (McGregor) as he and his wife Dawn (Jennifer Connelly) struggle to raise and understand their wayward daughter Merry (Dakota Fanning) in the '50s and '60s. The couple consult a psychiatrist who blames their kid's odd behaviour on unhealthy subconscious desires. According to the new-fangled Freudian theory, Merry must be in love with her father, a living legend since his days as a college athletics champion. She must also be jealous of her mother, a beautiful woman once crowned Miss New Jersey. At first brushing off these modern psychoanalytic ideas as simply ridiculous, the couple react with horror when young Merry asks her father to kiss her, "like he kisses Mommy." This is just the first of many overblown and brutal moments the film gradually introduces to portray the new generation as disturbed, sick and violent.

When Merry, now an adolescent, joins the ranks of discontented youth protesting the Vietnam war and the American government, the film then adopts her father's old-fashioned perspective. The Swede has never had that much criticism of his own country, which makes his daughter's revolt seem all the more misguided, unproductive and needlessly aggressive. In some ways it is. There is no denying that coming from a position of great privilege, Merry's anger often seems insolent and indulgent. The film follows the story of a failed, mentally ill activist – a woman who attempts to "bring the revolution home" by blowing up an innocent man in her hometown. Using her as a point of entry for this extremely complex and productive period of political activism seems cynical and condescending, whether on the part of Roth or McGregor.

Like the book before it, the film aims to express the heartbreak of a father completely overwhelmed and baffled by the world he has left for his daughter, his ideals of happiness and success so utterly crushed. The direction of the film is so matter-of-fact, the storytelling so obvious, the lack of nuance so palpable, that it seems to actually take its alarmist and patronising attitudes towards change at face value. This disturbingly conservative approach to the youth of the time leaves a sour taste, making it hard to empathise with a character who has never cared much for anything outside of his own life.

ELENA LAZIC



VICTOR
EZENFIS

NATACHA
RÉGNIER

FABRIZIO
RONGIONE

MATHIEU
AMALRIC

MARIA
DE MEDEIROS

Vincent, I am kind of your father.

the son
of joseph

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CAST BY CATHERINE GROSSEN COSTUME DESIGNER SARAH MOREL PRODUCTION DESIGNER VALÉRIE LOISELUX EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS STÉPHANE THIÉBAUT EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS DELPHINE TOMSON ASSOCIATE PRODUCER PHILIPPE LOGIE
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A-STREET-CAT-NAMED-BOB

Directed by_ **ROGER SPOTTISWOODE**
 Starring_ **BOB, LUKE TREADAWAY, RUTA GEDMINTAS**
 Released_ **4 NOVEMBER**

As anyone who owns either cats or dogs will know, after a long day at work there is no shame in returning home and talking to them. But if you engage in this patter, the instant thought occurs: is this just me? The silent wisdom of an animal, or our belief that they are really listening, can be a tonic for despair. *A Street Cat Named Bob* is the story of James Bowen, a former drug addict who lived rough on the streets of London. Bob, a stray tomcat with whom he strikes up a happy friendship, becomes his hero and redeemer, transforming the life of this one-time transient. However this film, directed by Roger Spottiswoode, is no saccharine fairytale. It may not sound like a child-friendly fable of hope and happiness, but as with the internationally best selling memoir on which it's based, it is absolutely that.

Transposing this wispy tale to the big screen must have been no easy feat, but the director and lead Luke Treadaway grapple with the task admirably. Indeed, Treadaway's fine central turn means that nearly 90 minutes of a one-sided conversation with a loveable moggy ends up being unfeasibly entertaining. The film's achilles heel, however, is its struggle to be both hard-hitting and humorous. Style-wise, it's also a mite clunky, swinging between seriousness to silliness at the drop of a hat. This unfortunately softens the humour and dampens the sense of emotional gravitas. During the scenes of James going through cold turkey, it's hard to accept all this dramatic weight after we've just been party to a comedic cat and dog chase through the London streets. In spite of its flaws, *A Streetcar Named Bob* remains a true-blue heartwarmer. The passion at its core is palpable and, of course, Bob purrs his way into infamy. When a lovely lady knits him a little scarf, cuteness levels cannot be contained. It's a family film that raises real issues in a sensitive way. And for that it should be praised. **ELISA ADAMS**

ANTICIPATION_

How can you not love a film about a cat!?

4

ENJOYMENT_

Can Bob really save this film?

3

IN RETROSPECT_ Re-watching this one over and over will be a pleasure, not a chore.

3



THE-WAILING

Directed by_ **NA HONG-JIN**
 Starring_ **KWAK DO-WON, HWANG JUNG-MIN, JUN KUNIMURA**
 Released_ **25 NOVEMBER**

Although called *The Wailing* in English, Ha Nong-jin's third feature (after 2008's *The Chaser* and 2010's *The Yellow Sea*) was released in its native South Korea under the title *Goksung*, which is also the name of the village where its mysteries unfold.

Small-town values propel events here. Amid a bizarre outbreak of malady, madness and murder, local policeman Jong-goo (Kwak Do-won) seeks answers with the kind of bumbling backwoods incompetence last seen in Bong Joon-ho's 2003 film *Memories of Murder*. Driven as much by crazy rumours, dreams, superstition and xenophobic scapegoating as by hard facts, Jong-goo is quick to persecute a limping Japanese recluse (Jun Kunimura). As Jong-goo's own daughter Hyo-jin (Kim Hwan-hee) falls ill and undergoes a radical change in personality, the cop is persuaded to turn to a shaman (Hwang Jung-min) for help, even as a trainee Catholic deacon joins the investigative team, and a woman (Chun Woo-hee) occasionally offers cryptic commentary from the sidelines.

"Why do doubts rise in your mind?" *The Wailing* begins with a Biblical quote (Luke 24.38-39) concerning the initial fear of Jesus' disciples that the resurrected, flesh-and-bone figure before them is a ghost. Doubt also dominates Na's tale of a whole community possessed. For Na conjures an uncanny, irrational spirit from the very indeterminacy of his plotting, leaving characters and viewers alike uncertain what they are seeing. As several explanatory frames vie to account for what is happening, it is left to each of us to decide if there's a slippery devil at work (and just who that demon might be), or if the villagers have been at the Kool-Aid. Either way, Na's unnerving game with perceptions exposes the conflicting ideologies of a nation still in development.

ANTON BITEL

ANTICIPATION_ A favourite directors working in a favourite genre.

4

ENJOYMENT_ By turns funny and despairing, this village noir brings the horror of uncertainty.

4

IN RETROSPECT_ Shows Korea caught between old and new, and forced to choose its poison.

4



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COLLEEN_ _ _ATWOOD_



One of Hollywood's foremost costume designers gives us some of the tips of her highly rarified trade.

You may not know the name but you'll sure as hell recognise the work. Colleen Atwood is one of Hollywood's foremost costume designers, her creations featuring in work by Michael Mann, Tim Burton, JJ Abrams and, most recently, Potter spin-off, *Fantastic Beasts and Where To Find Them*. Here, she offers some tips on how she was able to rise to the very top of the costume designing tree.

1. Do your research.

"Go multi directional in your research. *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* is set in 1926 New York City, so I looked into the place, the locations and the world of the story. I'm starting pre-production on a new Tim Burton movie and I'm assembling research and boards and fabrics. It's set in 1919 and in a circus, so there are a lot of details. When you start focusing your research on different towns and counties, only then do you see the differences. Things like jobs and income have a massive impact on how people look."

2. Nail the look of the movie.

"My initial meeting about *Fantastic Beasts* was with director David Yates and producer David Hayman together. With David Yates, you show him what you're thinking with every character. It's not the finished idea, it's more a taster, in order to impart an atmosphere. With this film we had great production designers working on it [Stuart Craig and James Hambidge]. Seeing the sets gives me a huge amount of colour and inspiration - as those guys start working much longer before we do. It frees you up from certain things when you see that other people are unafraid to look up, up, up rather than straight ahead."

3. Be creative, but manage your budgets.

"Well there's no such thing as an unlimited budget on the movies that we're making today. There's not that. It's a business, and if you're going to have a career you're going to have to know how to manage budgets. Because of the scope of *Fantastic Beasts*, it was on the larger side of things. But at the same time, you can't just decide that all the wizards are going to wear purple silk capes for no reason. Even in a fantasy, the costumes have to come from somewhere. The actors have to feel like their clothes are their character's clothes and not a big costume. I have a supervisor and they will sit down with me and we'll break it all down right at the beginning. I'm designing so fast that the spend is not my focus. It's just getting the stuff through the workroom and ready for camera. So you need that person to cover your back."

4. Design for men and women.

"I like doing both. I enjoy the scope of what you'd call a more epic women's costume. Like Charlize Theron's from *The Huntsman: Winter's War*, or Mia Wasikowska's from *Alice In Wonderland*. To me, the male costumes, like Eddie's in *Fantastic Beasts* or Johnny's in *Sweeney Todd*, they're fun too. It's great to make beautiful clothes for beautiful men. Nothing wrong with that."

5. Work with your subjects.

"Build a camaraderie. I've worked with Johnny Depp many times. He's always playing really different people, so what you do for them is different. You also develop an idea of what sits well on their bodies. Generally a subject won't ask for specific things, but if they do I definitely take it on. I guess it's always about being more character driven than fashion driven."

6. Remember past triumphs.

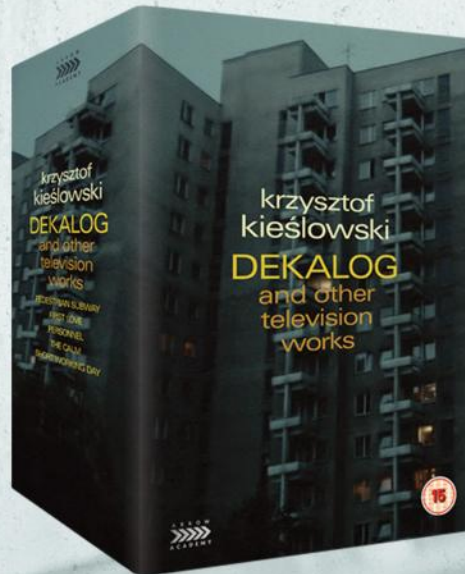
"I've worked on a bunch of things, and you sometimes forget stuff. Then later I see them again on TV, and recently I saw some pictures from a film I did years ago with Tim Burton called *Sleepy Hollow* and I really loved the costumes at the time I was making them. I saw a picture of a stripped dress being worn by Christina Ricci taken by Mary Ellen Mark, and was just, wow, I really like that dress, I wish I could see it again. That was one of the good ones. My memories are more than costume based than film based" 🍷

***Fantastic Beasts and Where To Find Them* opens worldwide on 18 November**



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too-short
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ARRIVAL

Directed by **DENIS VILLENEUVE**
 Starring **AMY ADAMS, JEREMY RENNER,**
FOREST WHITAKER
 Released **10 NOVEMBER**

Given that personal trauma is the prevailing throughline of Denis Villeneuve's filmmaking career so far, it's no surprise to find *Arrival* anchored by a familiar narrative motif. In this low-key science fiction parable, Amy Adams plays a linguistics professor named Louise Banks who is enlisted by the US government to establish an open line of communication with a monolithic spaceship which is hovering somewhere over rural Montana. Eleven identical "heptapods" have popped up at seemingly random locations around the globe, and as the world's superpowers clamour to ascertain the aliens' intentions, another more pertinent crisis comes to the fore. After reaching out to these mysterious, hyper-intelligent beings, it becomes clear that the most meaningful connection she will make is with Jeremy Renner's hunky physicist.

The subject of first contact has long been the preserve of blockbuster cinema – the answer to the question 'are we alone in the universe?' gleefully embellished by films in which extraterrestrials are commonly portrayed as a sinister threat to humanity. Amid all the body-snatching, landmark-vaporising chaos, few directors have ever stopped to consider what an alien invasion might look like at ground level. How would it play out over the course of days, weeks, months; not in the media or in some top secret military facility, but among ordinary people suddenly thrust into an extraordinary situation? Steven Spielberg and Robert Zemeckis each approached something more existential with *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* and *Contact* respectively, yet where those films revelled in scientific discovery and the thrill of the unknown, *Arrival* takes human agency at fatalistic face value. Credit to Villeneuve for offering such a sophisticated take on the genre, just don't go in expecting Big Things from what is effectively a Nicholas Sparks weepie with some space monsters thrown in. **ADAM WOODWARD**

ANTICIPATION_

Denis Villeneuve is great. Amy Adams is great.

4

ENJOYMENT_

Emotional, intelligent and a little underwhelming.

3

IN RETROSPECT_ *Like a surprisingly gripping airport novel you leave in your hotel room and then never think about again.*

3



THE INNOCENTS

Directed by **ANNE FONTAINE**
 Starring **LOU DE LAÂGE, AGATA BUZEK,**
AGATA KULESZA
 Released **11 NOVEMBER**

Poland, 1945: a young, French doctor breaks Red Cross protocol to deliver a number of secret babies. Actress Lou de Laâge turns in a detailed and subtle performance as medic Mathilde, who works in a Polish convent recovering from an "indescribable nightmare". What first appears as a place of peaceful refuge that's far from the bloody carnage of the frontline is unveiled as hell on earth. These women were repeatedly raped during a three day raid by Russian soldiers. They question their faith as their every thought is consumed by shame. *The Innocents* is a harrowing true story, so full of sorrow that watching it is a traumatic experience, but also a necessary one.

The convent is a quarantine, closed off from the simple joys of life during peacetime. These women are imprisoned by bedrooms referred to as 'cells' and stranded by the featureless, rolling landscape which flanks them on all sides. Co-writer-director Anne Fontaine employs rapid edits and fractured dialogue sequences to mirror the inner turmoil of her characters. Some scenes are slowly place and given a bluish hue, acting as a visual testament to collective depression. The contrasting lifestyles of sexually liberated Mathilde and her devout patients is deliberate. While she kisses her naked lover, Sister Maria (Agata Buzek) kisses the feet of her crucifix.

Fontaine excels with low-lit visuals and profound dialogue – "Faith is twenty four hours of doubt and one minute of hope". She refrains from buttering the audience up with unnecessary melodrama. Her stoical female characters instead engage in everyday tasks. They wash, cook and clean. It is through their usefulness that they find solace by the end of the film. *The Innocents* – tackling rape, war and religion – is an ambitious film. The gamble is worth it, though, making for a harrowing portrait of womanhood at war. **POPPY DORAN**

ANTICIPATION_ *Sacrebleu! Anne Fontaine celebrates a forgotten French heroine.*

3

ENJOYMENT_ *Tragedies reveal themselves like falling dominoes in this traumatising tale.*

4

IN RETROSPECT_ *The horrors of war stretch far beyond the battlefield.*

4



LIFE, ANIMATED

Directed by **_ROGER ROSS WILLIAMS**
Released **_9 DECEMBER**

Disney, although a giant, corporate machine within the film industry, has historically been associated with creating work that teaches children valuable moral lessons. Films like *Aladdin*, *Bambi* and *Peter Pan* have enlightened a generation of kids on everything from the inevitability of death to the importance of letting go of the past. Even though they may offer some good advice, the crushing reality of 'growing up' forces us all to move on from these colourful worlds. This powerful documentary illustrates what happens if you never stop living by the laws of Disney. Roger Ross Williams directs the artfully told story of Owen Suskind, a man who discovered he was autistic at around three years of age. Spending months after his diagnosis mute and introverted, he grew an affinity for Disney's animated output, discovering how the world works in the process. He learned to read and write from simply gawping at screen, and even his first words were a line in *The Little Mermaid*. Alongside interviews with his family and various medical experts, Williams uses Disney footage, home video and expressionistic original animation to relay Owen's incredible bond with cinema.

The documentary is by no means a Disney puff piece. It reveals that these animated marvels are limited as tools for personal development. Indeed, Owen still struggles with the complexity of real life. His only knowledge of romantic relationships comes from the conservative, family-oriented images he's become so familiar with. When his brother, Walt, asks him about sexual intercourse, Owen finds the subject incredibly hard to compute. Disney has given him a fantastic lease of life, but his grasp of reality is warped. Full of ups and downs, *Life, Animated* is a thoroughly absorbing, evocative story about a mind that has been both freed and trapped by an art form.

EWAN CAMERON

ANTICIPATION_

A big hit at Sundance.

3

ENJOYMENT_

Genuinely moving and a compelling subject.

4

IN RETROSPECT_

A wonderful example of the power of cinema and humanity.

4



RICHARD_LINKLATER: DREAM_IS_DESTINY

Directed by **_LOUIS BLACK, KAREN BERNSTEIN**
Starring **_JULIE DELPY, ETHAN HAWKE, JACK BLACK**
Released **_4 NOVEMBER**

There is already a great documentary about the working practices of Austin's favourite son, Richard Linklater. It's called *Double Play: Richard Linklater and James Benning*, and it was made by Gabe Klinger in 2013. Instead of traipsing on a biographical tour through the director's life and work with added commentary and clips, Klinger filters the material through an artistic friendship, and taking great pains to use the films as a way to draw stylistic and ideological parallels between the two artists. Karen Bernstein and Louis Black's *Richard Linklater: Dream Is Destiny*, by contrast, is a scrappy compendium of filched odds and sods with the feel of an electronic press kit. It comes across like an unofficial biography replete with a couple of solid testimonials from famous collaborators, a few choice snippets of archive material and lots of excerpts from DVD extras. Linklater lends his easygoing presence to the film, allowing the filmmakers into his utopian ranch where he does all of his creatin'. Otherwise, this is a procession of people finding different ways to explain why "Rick" is such an awesome dude, a genius filmmaker and an irrepressible maverick whose career defies industry logic. The films themselves aren't explored in any critical detail, in most cases with Bernstein and Black accepting the Rotten Tomatoes-enshrined legend. Everything from 2005's *Bad News Bears* to 2011's *Bernie* is hastily dismissed as second tier Linklater in a race to roll the conversation towards his award season titan, *Boyhood*. Fans of the director will already be keyed in to most of this. It passes the time for sure, but this is the exactly the type of lazy, generic docu-dirge that Linklater himself would never touch with a 10-foot, wonkily animated barge pole.

DAVID JENKINS

ANTICIPATION_ *Linklater is one of our heroes, but a great doc on him already exists.*

3

ENJOYMENT_

Standard issue worship doc.

2

IN RETROSPECT_

Poorly made, riding on hyperbole rather than insight.

2



BLEED_FOR_THIS

Directed by_
BEN YOUNGER
 Starring_
MILES TELLER
AARON ECKHART
CIARAN HINDS
 Released_
2 DECEMBER

ANTICIPATION_

3

It takes a long time for Ben Younger to make a movie. So listen up.

ENJOYMENT_

3

A journeyman effort that's satisfyingly light on melodrama.

IN RETROSPECT_

3

Miles Teller – not just a single string to his bow guy.

A film about an underdog returning to the fray and beating insurmountable personal odds, by a director who hasn't made a movie for 11 years. But first, we really need to talk about trailers, and how you should do everything in your god-given power to avoid watching the trailer for this film. Who knows what dark arts go into the production of trailers, that vital means of luring patrons to lay down their cash and step on to the ride. You'd suspect that revealing a little bit of the sizzle and keeping the steak itself completely in the shade would be a good way to stoke anticipation without giving the entire game away. Increasingly, however, modern trailers opt to reveal all the best bits, even if the drama itself is ruined by way of collateral damage.

There's a twist in *Bleed for This*, a scrappy but winning real-life boxing saga, that charges its timeworn material with a measure of intrigue and originality. It transforms the film from a straight-arrow biography into something that poses questions about mortality, the limitations of the body, and how we define success. And it only works if you go into the film knowing as little as possible about its subject, Vinny Pazienza, a roistering Rhode Island pugilist whose upward career trajectory is scuppered before its peak. Sure, if you're already familiar with the life and work of The Pazmanian Devil, then you'll likely have a good idea of everything set to go down here. But if you don't, take action so you can learn it first hand when you see the film.

Such sporting redemption tales usually come part and parcel with performances the size of Madison Square Gardens on half-price ticket night, but not so here. Miles Teller, instead of using this as a platform for lots of skyward fist pumping and clammy glances into the middle distance, keeps matters fairly low key. He even dials back his patented upstart braggadocio schtick to make Vinny come across as a fairly uncomplicated working class fellow. It's as if the trials he goes through are too emotionally complex for him to truly comprehend. Yet that state of mild ignorance ends up being a help rather than a hinderance. Even as Kevin Rooney, his balding, pot-bellied trainer, Aaron Eckhart never pushes too hard. He has a few neat speeches, a couple of inspiring pep talks, and his tragic status is cemented by an over fondness for the hard stuff, but the heart never makes it to the sleeve.

The filmmaking itself follows suit. In the spirit of its hero, it never opts for any smart moves or fancy footwork, it keeps things as no-nonsense as possible with its eyes firmly locked on the prize. Younger does, however, present Pazienza as a Catholic deity, and the story itself plays a little like the Passion of Christ, crown of thorns and resurrection included. Amid what seems like an unfortunate glut of boxing movies, this one just about has its head above the pack. Whether its understated, low-slung vibe will make the connection required for a knock out remains to be seen.

DAVID JENKINS

-- BEN -- YOUNGER --



We talk to the one-time prizefighter as he returns to the movie ring after an extended hiatus.

Motorcycles and movies are Ben Younger's two biggest passions, but it's been over a decade since the now 44-year-old New Yorker indulged his love of the latter. Back in 2000 his testosterone-fuelled financial thriller *Boiler Room* was being talked up as the most exciting debut feature in years. Now he's back from the wilderness with a new attitude and a new film, the punchy, crowd-pleasing Miles Teller vehicle *Bleed for This*. Just don't call it a boxing movie...

LWLies: You're over in the UK scouting for a film about the Isle of Man TT Race. As an adrenaline junkie, did a boxing movie just feel like a natural fit? Younger: Boxing doesn't do much for me, I'm not a fan. But I don't really regard this as a boxing movie. I was actually just looking for something I could write, I wasn't thinking about directing again. I'd taken some time off to get my pilot license and I was working as a chef down in Costa Rica, doing some surfing, and I heard of this guy's story. It just seemed interesting to me.

There have been a few high-profile boxing movies in the last year or so. Why now?

I suppose. *Southpaw* is unwatchable though. And I didn't really care for *Creed*. My approach was: don't treat it like a boxing movie, just treat it like an all-time greatest ever comeback story. *Raging Bull* is the one for me, but again I wouldn't call that a boxing movie.

Scorsese was an executive producer on *Bleed for This*. How did that come about?

He called me in to talk about *Boiler Room* a few months before *Wolf of Wall Street* came out. He told me that he had used *Boiler Room* as reference material. It was one of the best days of my life. And then he asked me what I was working on. So I gave him the pitch, he got excited. He asked if he could read the script, so I gave him the script. Then he called me two weeks later and it just went from there. When we were making the film he was shooting *Silence*, so I didn't really see him after that. I hope no one compares the film to *Raging Bull* though.

Is it right that you made this movie for less than *Boiler Room*?

Yeah. It was fucking nothing, man. And we didn't even get the amount we needed for the 26-day shoot we had scheduled. It wasn't anyone's fault, just some accounting mix up with Rhode Island, the amount of tax percentage that you think you're getting or some bullshit. So I stupidly put my whole salary into the movie, and I ended up having to borrow money out of my mom's 401k. That's not a good look.

Is it your job to make the most out of whatever budget you have?

That's the funniest thing, 'cause you piss and moan and fight for more money, but if they had given it to me the movie wouldn't have been half as good. At the time you feel like you're making a huge concession. You fight tooth and nail for what you think you need but in hindsight you're often wrong.

How much of directing is about managing egos? Your own included.

It used to be the case a lot more so when I was young. I was combative and pretty insecure back in the day. Insecurity is the biggest breeder of the ego.

So why the break? I felt like I could take five years between movies, like I was fucking Terrence Malick or something, and I put all my eggs into this Isle of Man TT movie basket. It was and still is my passion project, but if you're a young director in Hollywood you need to have four or five projects on the go, minimum. You can't just take your time and only make the thing you want to make. I found that out the hard way.

What kinds of films do you want to make going forward?

After the Isle of Man project I'm going to make a movie about the prison system in the US. It's about the privatization of the federal prison system – a young woman wrote it, and it's fucking cut-throat, man. Oh, and another film called *Sexed*, about monogamy in America. And a western, called *17 Bullets*. Hopefully that will keep me busy for a while 🍷



Starring **CONNIE MASON** *Playboy's Favorite*



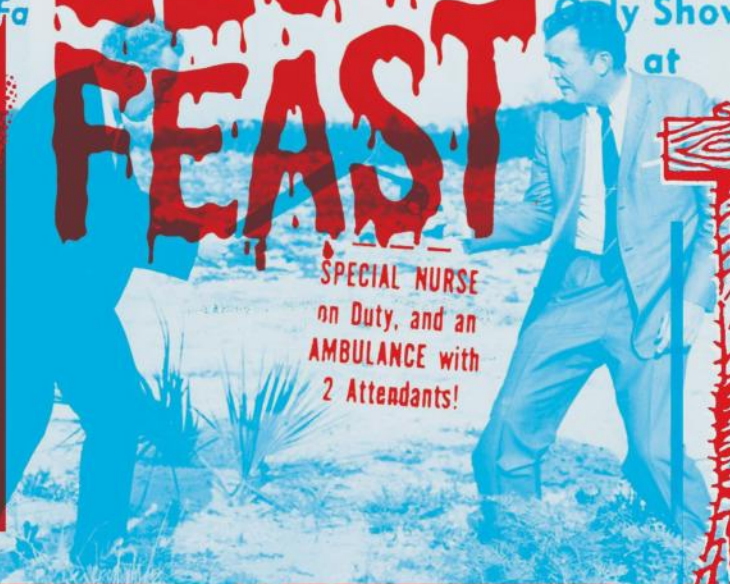
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ADULT HORROR!

SHOCK_AND_GORE: THE FILMS OF_HERSHELL_GORDON_LEWIS

Directed by_ HERSCHELL GORDON LEWIS	Starring_ VARIOUS	1963-72	OUT NOW	DVD / Blu-ray
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The splatter film is the slathering runt of the horror film genre. And they came into being because of the weather. It goes something like this: Herschell Gordon Lewis, purveyor of 1950s 'nudie cutie films', was cold working in Chicago, so angled for a job in the sun. This took him and his crew to Florida to shoot a nudist film, which took less than a week to complete. Lewis, contemplating extending his trip, stopped in at the charming art deco Suez Motel on Miami Beach, which was decorated with a gaudy plaster sphinx in the entrance. Lewis, sitting in the motel coffee shop, inspired by the Egyptian-style statute, the huge success of Hitchcock's *Psycho*, and a bottle of ketchup, jotted some ideas onto a napkin. And 1963's *Blood Feast* was born.

Blood Feast was the first film of its kind, the very first to show explicit gore, including tongues being ripped out and limbs cut off. It caused something of a sensation. As one hard-bitten exhibitor told Lewis after a screening, it had the effect of shocking his rowdy patrons into stunned silence. "Up comes that tongue scene – all you see is a bunch of white eyeballs," he said. No doubt helped by a 'dreadful, lurid' ad campaign (a mainstay of marketing man Lewis' films), and getting banned by some cinemas, it took \$4 million on a budget of less than \$25k.

Lewis knew he was on to something. He could not only frighten an audience, he could sicken them as well. He became dubbed the 'Godfather of Gore' and his influence would extend to mainstream cinema. Films like *Friday 13th* and the *Saw* franchise raked in millions by using ever more elaborate methods to turn stomachs. His grindhouse fare has been given an extraordinarily lavish box set treatment from Arrow Films, with 14 titles all dusted off and restored in all their gaudy, garish glory. The deluxe edition box set comes with, amongst other things, a bloody eyeball and a replica of the Barf Bag, a gimmick handed out to cinema patrons for the original release of *Blood Feast*. You might still need it while watching the immaculate 4k restoration of the film.

It's the story of deranged Miami caterer, Fuad Ramses, killing women and collecting their body parts for a 'blood feast' to re-incarnate an Egyptian goddess. The opening scene offers a nod to the infamous shower sequence in Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*, presenting a blonde woman disrobing and hopping into a bathtub prior to being dismembered by the crazed killer. It's a striking, nasty sequence (and might have helped get it labelled a video nasty in the '80s). The original poster declared: "Nothing so shocking in the annals of horror", and up until this point, there really hadn't been.

What follows is a police procedural, punctuated with ever more gruesome set pieces (including the tongue, actually a lamb's, being pulled out). The acting might generously be described as spirited – the chief of police seems to be channelling Marlon Brando, while a victim's distraught boyfriend has a beach breakdown that is something to behold. The gore effects lack sophistication, but *Blood Feast* has a crude, eerie charm, and the film is more than simply a curio. While many cite George A Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* from 1968 as the first groundbreaking, truly X-rated and fiercely independent horror feature, *Blood Feast* beat it to the punch. What Lewis did took real guts. And a lamb's tongue.

Among Lewis's other horror films collected here is 1972's *The Gore Gore Girls* which might be considered Lewis at his most profoundly blunt. It's little more than a series of stripping routines and sequences of Grand Guignol gore, and it features Lewis' most ghastly moment, involving a stripper, a pair of scissors and some milk. Dario Argento surely took note of the excruciatingly grisly smashed mirror murder.

Lewis didn't just make horror films. Included here for completists are a hillbilly musical, a juvenile delinquent film, a sci-fi comedy about a sex robot, and a female biker flick named *She-Devils on Wheels*, effectively a low budget knock off of Russ Meyer's *Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!*. Also, the wonderfully titled *Scum of the Earth!*, a sordid little blackmail thriller starring William Kerwin as Harmon, a jaded photography specialising in taking lewd shots to sell to high school kids – mirroring Lewis' penchant for appealing to the audience's basest instincts. The film has a wonderfully weary, nihilistic feel that matches any of the best film noirs from the Fifties. At one point someone asks Harmon "Why don't you give this up and so something decent?"

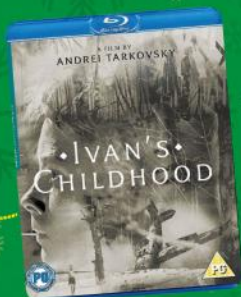
In the early '70s, Lewis did just that, quitting filmmaking to become a copywriter of note. The bottom had dropped out of the exploitation market, after Hollywood smelled a buck and moved in on the horror territory themselves. Similarly, the Suez Motel, where it all began, and which became an unlikely Mecca for gorehounds, was bulldozed to make way for a high rise monstrosity. Sadly, Lewis died in September at the age of 87. Perhaps it's time for another of Fuad's blood feast ceremonies.

DAVID HAYLES

best of 2016

collector's reissues

**ivan's
childhood**
blu-ray



mirror
blu-ray



solaris
blu-ray



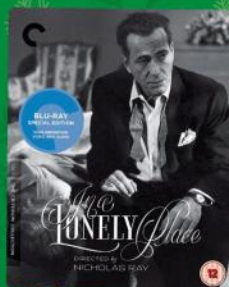
stalker
blu-ray



dr. strangelove
blu-ray



grey gardens
blu-ray



**only angels
have wings**
blu-ray

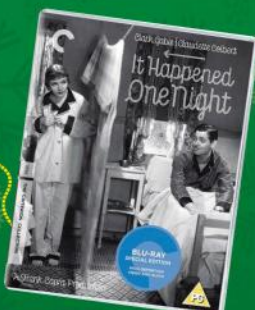


**in a lonely
place**
blu-ray

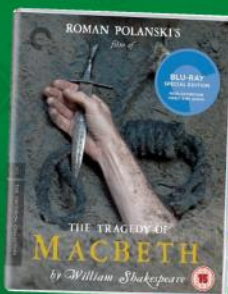


l'avventura
blu-ray

**it happened
one night**
blu-ray



**the tragedy
of macbeth**
blu-ray



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creepshow 2
blu-ray



evilspeak
blu-ray



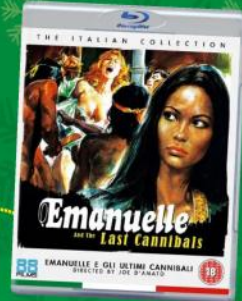
burial ground
blu-ray



1900 (novecento)
blu-ray



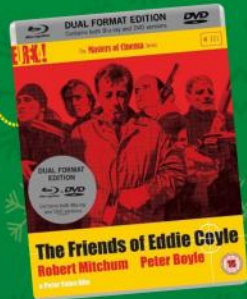
emanuelle and the last cannibals
blu-ray



eureka
dual format edition



the friends of eddie coyle
dual format edition



cat people
blu-ray



three days of the condor
dual format edition



deep red
blu-ray

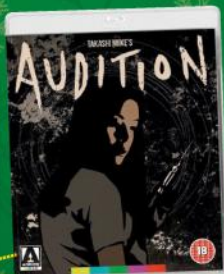


the mutilator
dual format edition

fopp stores

bristol college green
cambridge sidney st
edinburgh rose st
glasgow union st & byres rd
london covent garden
manchester brown st
nottingham broadmarsh
shopping centre
oxford gloucester green

audition
blu-ray



matinee
blu-ray





STELLA_CADENTE

Directed by_ LLUÍS MIÑARRO	2014
Starring_ ALEX BRENDEMÜHL BÁRBARA LENNIE LORENZO BALDUCCI	OUT NOW
	DVD

It's possible to see Lluís Miñarro's acidic 2014 comedy as a male-centric analogue to Sofia Coppola's *Marie Antoinette*. Both films explore the tumultuous modern history of their respective locales (Spain and France) by focusing solely on the domestic exploits of a bewildered and enforceably cloistered royal. The title seems apt, as it charts the gradual but consistent downward trajectory of King Amadeo I (Alex Brendemühl) between the years 1870 and 1873. Bundled off to a fortress to prevent assassination, he tools about in regal finery, attempting and failing to assert his influence on matters political, and eventually accepting his lot as a prisoner of tradition. Miñarro pieces the film together with great delicacy and a welcome shot of dry wit, even if, as a whole, it feels like a joke that long outstays its welcome. Filming boredom and inertness is never an easy task, and the story sadly lacks for variation. Yet, the film is more than a blunt critique of the essentially ceremonial role of the monarchy. Amadeo is presented as an essentially tragic figure whose surfeit of spare time allows him to explore some of life's more base pleasures. Also on this Second Run disc is the director's jolly 2009 debut, *Familystrip*, an improvised (mostly) black and white documentary which explores the limits of portraiture. As Miñarro and his parents sit over a number of sessions to be painted, the presence of the camera draws out stories of the old Spain and how it has evolved (and devolved) over the decades. It's a fun, intimate, slight hang-out movie about ways to kickstart memories and how profound personal histories are sometimes locked up inside us. The act of posing for a painting – an immortalisation of time – is the simple catalyst for personal remembrance. **DAVID JENKINS**



THE_DRILLER_KILLER

Directed by_ ABEL FERRARA	1979
Starring_ ABEL FERRARA CAROLYN MARZ BAYBI DAY	Released_ 28 NOV
	Blu-ray

For those who haven't already partaken, a single question looms when it comes to delving into Abel Ferrara's notorious 1979 "video nasty": is it as horrifically violent as its poster (depicting a bearded man receiving the business end of a power drill through the frontal lobe) suggests? The answer is yes, but perhaps not in the expected ways. *The Driller Killer* does not skimp on scenes of graphic murder, but it's more concerned with a society in which violence is has become part of the scenery. Ferrara himself stars as greasy, disillusioned, down-and-out painter, Reno Miller, and in one shocking sequence he glances down to the street from the window of his dingy apartment and witnesses a stabbing. A body lies on the pavement and people carry on with the business as if nothing has happened. What makes the film great, however, is that Ferrara isn't interested in the generic cliché of showing how a good, honest man is transformed by his environment into a wild killer. Reno is whiny and entitled, a bohemian chancer living with two women who become increasingly bored with his erratic behaviour. Maybe the film is a portrait of growing up out of synch with the people around you? As Reno craves peace and quiet to paint, a no-wave punk band move into the apartment downstairs, and it's their early-hour jam sessions which cause him to find solace in drilling transients to death. The most revolting scene, however, depicts Ferrara scoffing down a pizza in a quasi-erotic fashion. It's a singularly grim and grimy dirge of a movie, one you need to wash off your skin afterwards. Arrow's new Blu-ray edition of the film comes with little-seen 2010 documentary *Mulberry Street*, a portrait of the neighbourhood where *The Driller Killer* is set. **DAVID JENKINS**



TO LIVE AND DIE IN LA

Directed by_ WILLIAM FRIEDKIN	1994
	Released _21 NOV
	Blu-ray

Starring_
WILLIAM PETERSEN
WILLEM DAFOE
JOHN PANKOW

Like so many before him, the actor William Petersen failed to capitalise on his 1980s screen heyday. The one-two punch of Michael Mann's *Manhunter* and William Friedkin's *To Live and Die in LA* presented him as a wild dog who had been tamed, but was desperate to return to the nasty, bone-chomping old ways. In both films he plays a cop who appears to channel a form of sexual ecstasy from his work, where the eventual capture of an evasive suspect acts as orgasmic pay-off. In Mann's film he (barely) remains within the bounds of the law, but Friedkin has him go so far off the rails, that it will make you question whether there were any rails in the first place. Adapted from a pulp novel by Gerald Petievich, *To Live and Die in LA* is an hysterical, heated west coast policier which operates with very simple maths: the more desperate Petersen's secret service agent Richard Chance is to succeed, the nastier his nemesis (Willem Dafoe's devil-may-care counterfeiter, Eric Masters) becomes. Both men are convinced of their own supremacy. Chance believes that everyone can be gotten in the end, where Masters is an escape artist who always seems to be one move ahead. This remains Friedkin's last truly great film, a breathless snapshot of a neon-hued LA presented as a crumbling tropical paradise. What nudges this above the conventional cop-thriller pack is an astonishing chase sequence about two-thirds in that acts as both a nod back to the famous New York car/subway train race from his 1971 classic, *The French Connection*, and a personal challenge to up the destructo ante. This brand new 4K restoration from Arrow comes with a commentary by the director and a making-of feature. **DAVID JENKINS**



NAPOLÉON

Directed by_ ABEL GANCE	1927
	Released _21 NOV
	Blu-ray

Starring_
ALBERT DIEUDONNÉ
VLADIMIR ROUDENKO
EDMOND VAN DAËLE

This is a big deal. Books have been written and, no doubt, stern words have been traded on the subject of Abel Gance's stupendous 1927 historical epic, mainly with regard to film preservation and ethical questions regarding cinematic reconstruction. Piecing a vintage film together from materials secured from sources around the globe isn't just a simple case of finding the segments of a sprawling puzzle. It's about second guessing (as best you can) the intentions of a long-dead director, as well as attempting to create a version of a film which hasn't been manipulated and "improved upon" by modern techniques. The BFI's three-disc Blu-ray is the product of years of dedicated work by film historian Kevin Brownlow who perhaps knows this film as intimately as the director himself once did. Without meaning to sound too reductive, this rousing biography of the greatest military tactician of the modern age plays like a superhero saga, replete with origin story, self-realisation and then, finally, a triumphant gallop into battle, filmed with three separate cameras and tinted to resemble the French Tricolour flag. The film runs to five-and-a-half hours and not a frame is wasted. The complex political machinations of Europe before, during and after the revolution are rendered through clever symbols and scenes of high drama, all of which pivot around a galvanising central performance by Gance regular, Albert Dieudonné. The film's mid-section burns slowly, but its climax – scored to Carl Davies's rhapsodic fanfare – is the sort of cinema which stops the blood in your veins and draws the tears from your eyes. This Blu-ray edition should be considered an essential purchase for anyone unable to make one of the 35mm screenings around the UK from 11 November. **DAVID JENKINS**



PUNCH-DRUNK LOVE

Directed by_ PAUL THOMAS ANDERSON	2002
Starring_ ADAM SANDLER EMILY WATSON PHILIP SEYMOUR HOFFMAN	Released_ 21 NOV
	DVD

There is a crazy theory kicking about in the lower, seamier recesses of the internet which says that Paul Thomas Anderson's 2002 feature, *Punch-Drunk Love*, is a science fiction movie. Yes, you can consume it as a charming, pleurably off-key LA romance in which a harried malcontent (Adam Sandler's Barry Egan) transcends his limitations as a man and secures the heart of the headstrong damsel, Lena Leonard (Emily Watson). Yet, the theory goes that Barry is in actual fact a superhero who is working undercover in a back-alley plunger sales outlet, his extravagant blue suit more a costume than casual attire. And Lena – get this – is an alien who has landed on Earth in search of salvation. The big, unexplained crash at the beginning of the film is Lena's craft plummeting to Earth. The busted harmonium that Barry nabs from the curb is a nod to the monoliths in 2001: *A Space Odyssey*. While Anderson went on to make films like *The Master* and *There Will Be Blood* which were intentionally oblique in their construction and forced deeper questioning of their true intentions, *Punch-Drunk Love*, comes across as being driven by pure untethered energy. There's a musicality to its construction that's jazzy and impulsive – a feeling of control, but also a daring hunger to explore and experiment. Where *Boogie Nights* and *Magnolia* were fraught, highly strung, precious films, this one feels loose and relaxed. A film with its shirt-collar undone. It looks to the past, to classic-era Technicolor musicals and screwball comedies. But it also looks to the future, toying with film grammar and formal technique. This has been a long time hold-out on Blu-ray, so a big hat tip to the crew at Criterion for getting it out there. The director has made many very great films. At time of writing, this remains The One. **DAVID JENKINS**



PULSE

Directed by_ KIYOSHI KUROSAWA	2001
Starring_ KATÔ HARUHIKO ASÔ KUMIKO ARISAKA KURUME	Released_ 5 DEC
	Blu-ray

The Japanese director Kiyoshi Kurosawa has become something of a darling on the festival circuit, usually producing a film or two a year. *Pulse* initially appears as a copycat ghost story made on the back of the glut of titles that were marketed in the UK as 'Asia Extreme' or J-Horror, a trend that was kickstarted by Hideo Nakata's *Ring* in 1998. While a lot of sub par cinema was given an easy pass in the name of shelf filling and trend hunting, Kurosawa's film insidiously bucked the trend. It takes the fractured shell of a traditional ghost story and meshes it with more contemporary concerns, in particular an epidemic of depression that appears to be sweeping across Japan, and possibly the globe. The film weaves two intersecting tales of youngish computer-literate students who happen across an eerie website called Forbidden Room. It depicts a lightly pixelated interior space and, if you watch for long enough, a ghostly figure skulks from out of the visual noise. Computers, monitors, keyboards, modems, floppy discs all become symbols of self destruction, as characters who engage with certain sites receive visitations from apparitions who tend to vanish, leaving an Hiroshima-like ash shadow against the wall. The intricate plot is unfurled gradually, and while it's not always immediately obvious what's happening and why, Kurosawa maintains an atmosphere of nauseating dread. The ultra saturated visuals make the whites piercing and the blacks almost bottomless, mimicking the sensation of being cooped up in a dingy apartment all day as sunlight attempts (and fails) to enter the room. Even though the early '00s technology itself appears retrograde, Kurosawa's stunning film has lost not a byte of its power. **DAVID JENKINS**

"AN AMBITIOUS,
WELL CRAFTED, VERY
WATCHABLE FILM"

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"EXPLORES SEXUALITY
WITH CREATIVE FLAIR"



LITTLE WHITE LIES

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF
KISS ME



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ALEXANDRA-THERESE KEINING

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ORDINARY BOY.
HE'S NO
ORDINARY GIRL.**

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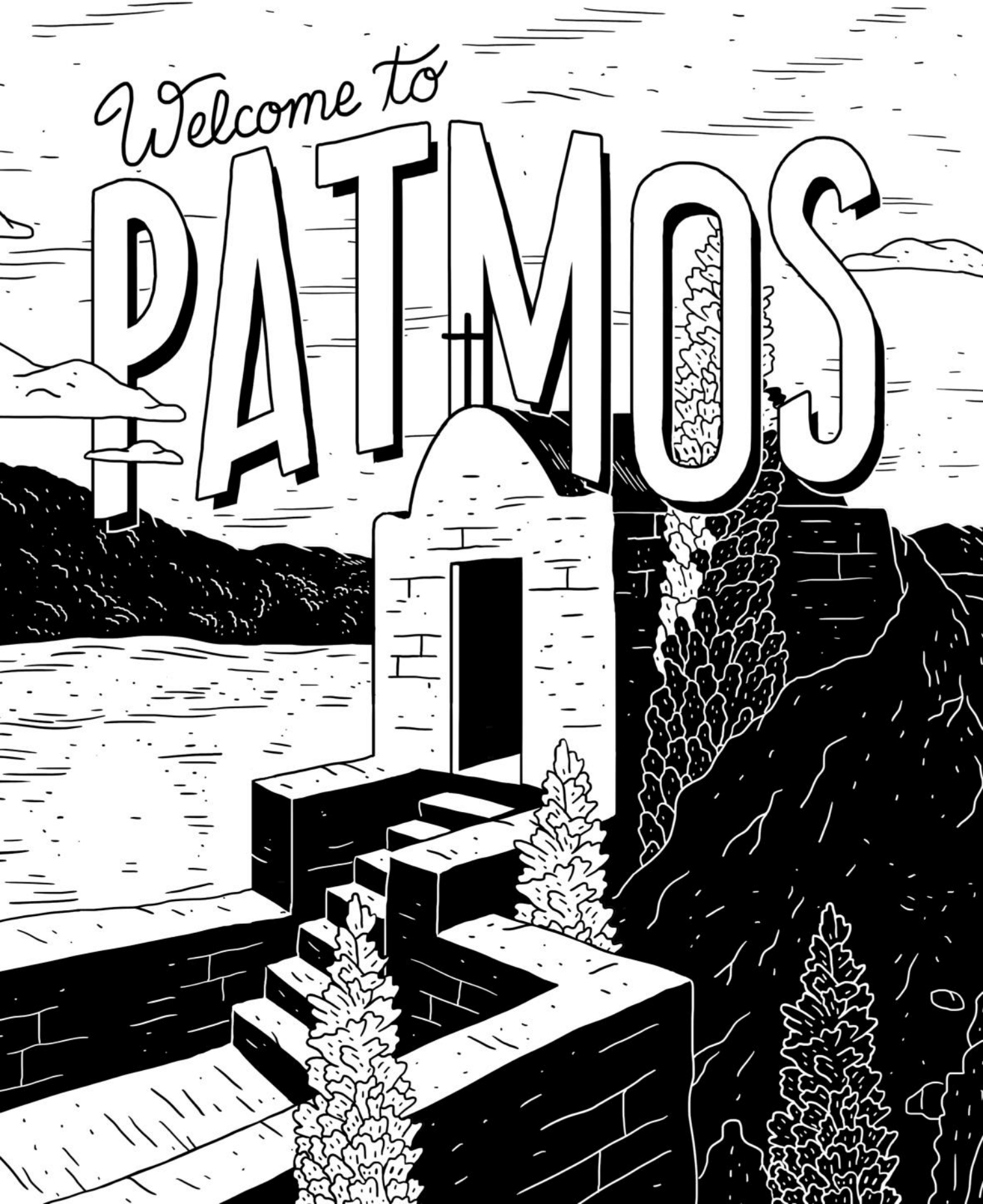
CURZON
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Welcome to

PATMOS



We report from a miniature movie celebration on a Mediterranean island paradise.

There are three steps to being here," said festival director, Babis Tsoutsas, opening the sixth iteration of International Film Festival of Patmos on a bright July day. "One: take the boat here for nine hours. Two: order a coffee – 40 minutes later someone will ask if you still want the coffee. Three: relax." Relaxation is a drug in the air that soaks into your senses. It emanates through the sun and the rapture-inducingly beautiful sea on all sides of Patmos, a Greek island with no permanent cinema and a population of 3,000.

It's a culture shock being here as a foreign journalist accustomed to the festival grind of daily screenings. IFFP's films start at 6pm and are programmed with consideration for the locals, meaning that some titles in the biggest slots have long ago come and gone (*Youth, Fire At Sea, Mustang*).

There's also the fact that you're on an island paradise. Island time is a legitimate phenomenon and takes some adjusting to. Once in place, the adjustment affords profound pleasure. To put it differently: ahead of discovering new films, you are discovering a new culture. Usual logic for determining success is moot in these circumstances. The programme was only announced days ahead of the festival opening, contributing to woefully low attendance at those screenings beyond the main outdoor Skala cinema. Follow the thread, however, and it ends in money, or the lack thereof available for the arts in Greece. The festival didn't have the funding to employ staff for long, so it all came together in a last minute scramble.

An overnight boat from Athens was the mode of passage, sharing a cabin with a woman who has gone on to be a personal hero – Professor Carol Dysinger from NYU's Tisch School of Arts who goes on regular trips to Afghanistan to direct documentaries. Being lost in the dark while walking a winding coastal road was how the first night in Patmos was spent. This was the result of a wrong turn while looking for the UNESCO-protected mountain village of Hora, in which one of the three pop-up cinemas was situated. There were rumours about a festival bus taking guests to Hora, but it never materialised. Making it up the mountain felt like a mythological undertaking of greater spiritual significance than finding a cinema has ever previously meant. Learning the local bus timetable, and figuring out that hitchhiking was safe and normal, was one thing, but that only got you to the very base of Hora.

The first success, however, was unforgettable. After navigating a maze of labyrinthine streets lined by heart-stoppingly beautiful whitewashed houses, and not knowing what was around the next corner, a sign finally revealed the 'Old School of Hora'. Inside was a courtyard containing several temporary bars and a characteristically gorgeous view down the island. There was a building full of wicker chairs, each adorned by a 'Sundance Channel' branded cushion. I was the only person in the building for a stretch, enduring a comically-overlong montage of sponsors' adverts. This only whetted an eventual appreciation for the prize: films – films about the ravages of this world viewed from a secluded haven.

The migration crisis was the theme running through the festival. Gianfranco Rosi's *Fire at Sea* and Jonas Carpignano's *Mediterranea* were the key world cinema offerings in this area, nestled amid Greek films that rightfully dominated. Literally-titled documentaries like *Patmos: Echoes of the Apocalypse* and *On the Edge of the Aegean, Kastorizo* provided links to the setting's turbulent history.

The Femina Libera strand programmed by Georgia Spencer-Davison thrillingly turned up a favourite and radically-underseen gem from 2015: Laura Bispuri's *Sworn Virgin*. Stand-out new discoveries were character studies of young refugees: Marianna Economou's *The Longest Run* and Denmark's multiple-directed series, *Children on the Run*. Running alongside the program was a workshop devised for five emerging filmmakers who had paid 2,000 Euros (or 1,000 with a scholarship) to spend the festival devising short film concepts with the help of mentors. (Carol was attending in the role of a mentor, of course!)

As festival films didn't start until 6pm, time could be given over to shadowing these workshops. I grew attached to the filmmakers who allowed me to witness the delicate growth of newborn ideas. It was possible to witness their frustration at a few organisational complacencies, but also the workings of their unique imaginations as they figured out which aspects of ideas to pursue, and which aspects to let go of. Speaking to the Patmions who turned up for festival screenings revealed how valuable this annual influx of films is to them, but the inverse is true: the location is valuable to harried film industry people. In Patmos I saw more than I ever have of the mechanics of running a festival, and it's still possible to conjure the exquisite sensory memory of being surrounded by such perfectly clear sea. 🌊

LAWNMOWER MAN 2: BEYOND CYBERSPACE



<p>Directed by</p> <p>FARHAD MANN</p>	<p>Starring</p> <p>PATRICK BERGIN MATT FREWER ELY POUGET DALE E HOUSE CARL CARLSSON</p>
<p>Trailers</p> <p>THE KRAYS 2: THE KRAY-KRAYS, BERT & ERNIE'S VATICAN VACATION, INACCURATE CONCEPTION</p>	<p>Cherrypick</p> <p>"MY LAP IS YOUR LAP, SENATOR.."</p>
<p>Tagline</p> <p>'GOD MADE HIM SIMPLE, SCIENCE MADE HIM A GOD. NOW HE WANTS REVENGE.'</p>	<p>Released</p> <p>1996</p>

Joe Pantoliano had the right idea. Greasy dollops of oatmeal slop, itchy woollen jumpers and being forever hunted down by packs of metal-tentacled sperm-copters had turned his life into a bleak and insanitary drudge leavened only by random bouts of bone-squealing terror. Joey Pants wanted out. He wanted his toys back. Cypher, Pantoliano's character in 1999's phone-fetish-fantasy, *The Matrix*, is presented as a coward and a Judas who will terminally sell out his friends in order to get back into the garden. For what is waking life compared to the slick PVC rapture of cyberspace? Cypher is a murderous cad and a stone-cold prick, but had he been in *Lawnmower Man 2: Beyond Cyberspace*, he would be the hero.

Let's pause briefly to remember how bizarre a construct the original 1992 *Lawnmower Man* really was. Seemingly based on two blind stabs into the dictionary, it spliced the Lawn Care genre that was kicked off by Douglas Sirk's 1955 shed-based romancer *All That Heaven Allows* with the Virtual Reality craze sparked by Dire Straits' 'Money For Nothing' video. Appropriating the title of an all-but-unrelated Stephen King story, the resulting singularity found pipe-chomping scientist Pierce Brosnan using his neighbour's simpleton gardener Jobe Ueffa Fahey in comedy dungarees) to test freaky-deaky mind experiments that turn him from green-fingered naïf to wrathful VR cyber-Christ.

Four years and one throwaway line about facial reconstruction later and Jobe was back in the form of Matt Frewer – best known as satirical '80s computer-aided video jockey Max Headroom. Now even more cracked than his first incarnation, Jobe jacks into the net and causes all manner of real-world havoc in the hope that humanity will join him in the fiendish Minecraft utopia he has built in cyberspace (there may also be some smallprint about worshipping him as a god). Out, for some reason, to stop

him is freelance computer whiz and all-round Irish hunkpapa Patrick Bergin. Perhaps chosen to replace Brosnan because the two had played brothers in 1988's Guinness-fuelled *Shane* remake *Taffin*, Bergin is the man who invented the software that Jobe is currently abusing. He has since traded his three piece suit for a rain stick and let his freak flag fly into a waist-length nightmare of dreadlocks threaded with shells, feathers and (possibly chocolate) coins that make him look as if Jack Sparrow has laid down his cutlass and got a job managing a Rainforest Cafe.

Still, he's happy up on top of his mountain, tending his cherry tomatoes while block-quoting passages from 'Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance' until a gang of jack-happy inner-city kids (dab of designer dirt on each cheek, doughboy caps turned backwards, fingerless gloves) and their computer-savvy dog, Spectrum, rock up in a tricked-out, tech-heavy antique bread van and spill the electro-beans on Jobe's empyrean stylings. The rest of the film sees Pat and the kids (Spectrum takes one for the team and eats hot lead kibble saving our heroes from a killer deathbot) running around corridors until Jobe – channelling an especially incensed and loquacious Stewie Griffin in a studded gold onesie – delivers a 20 minute closing monologue before Bergin runs him through with a haunted broadsword.

But who is right? Who has really won this war? Is it the bare-chested Bergin, with his organic cherry tomatoes and European attitudes to public nudity, or Jobe, a manchild ahead of his time who wants nothing more for his fellow man than to follow him across the threshold of a bold new age (and worship him as a deity)? Is it Neo, with his no-wukkas groove, non-actor Aussie friends and embarrassing rave nights or is it Cypher, slicing into pixelated filet mignon, cocooned from harm and grief, watched over by machines of loving grace? 🍷

A large, high-contrast black and white portrait of a woman with dark, curly hair, looking slightly upwards and to the left. Her face is the central focus of the poster.

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Editorial

Editor

David Jenkins
david@tcolondon.com

Digital Editor

Adam Woodward
adam@tcolondon.com

Contributing Editor

Sophie Monks Kaufman
sophie@tcolondon.com

Social Editor

Gabriela Helfet
gabriela@tcolondon.com

Editorial Interns

Lauren Thompson, Ewan
Cameron, Poppy Doran,
Wilbur Roberts

Art

Creative Director

Timba Smits
timba@tcolondon.com

Art Director – LWLies

Laurene Boglio
laurene@tcolondon.com

Art Director – Huck

Oliver Stafford
oliver@tcolondon.com

71A Gallery

Events Manager

Lidia Buonaiuto
lidia@tcolondon.com

TCOLondon for Brands

Head of Agency

Bindi Kaufmann
bindi@tcolondon.com

Head of Content

D'Arcy Doran
darcy@tcolondon.com

Lead Creative

Shelley Jones
shelley@tcolondon.com

Head of Production (Video)

Isabel Freeman
isabel@tcolondon.com

Director/Producer

Zach Sebastian
zach@tcolondon.com

Branded Books

Clive Wilson
clive@tcolondon.com

Media Planner

Alexia Stam
alexia@tcolondon.com

Publishing

Publisher

Vince Medeiros
vince@tcolondon.com

Head of Operations

Taryn Paterson
taryn@tcolondon.com

Media Sales

Oliver Slade
oliver.slade@tcolondon.com

Special Projects

Steph Pomphrey
steph@tcolondon.com

Legal

Alex Wade

Office Manager

Elisa Adams
elisa@tcolondon.com

General Manager

Wendy Klerck
wendy@tcolondon.com

On the Cover

Chris DeLorenzo

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info@tcolondon.com

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Oliver Slade
oliver.slade@tcolondon.com
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Stock LWLies

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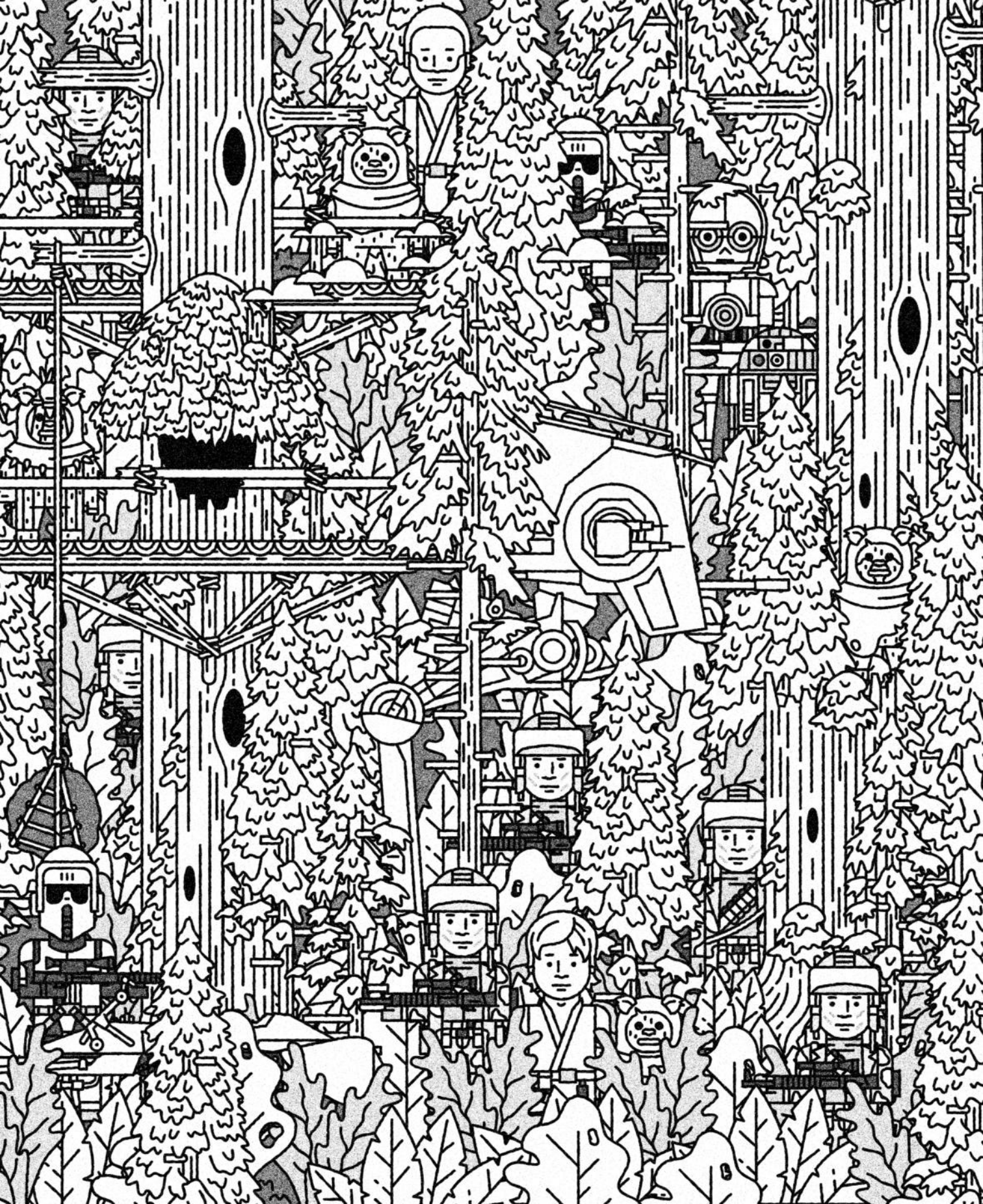


LWLIES:

What do you love about movies?

GARETH EDWARDS:

I feel like films... I dunno. It's like...
dreaming out loud. They have such...
It's the closest thing to a dream that
you can have, in the way that they miss
out all the boring bits. They're symbolic
and exaggerated. And just like dreams are
trying to tell you something about your
inner self that you didn't really realise,
I think films can do the same. When films
are firing on all cylinders, they truly can
affect you for the rest of your life in a
really positive way. Um, yeah...



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